HOW CONSUMERS CREATE
ALTERNATIVE CONSUMER JOURNEYS
VIA IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCES

by

Kimberley Mosher

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Abstract

Consumers who desire consumption items are thought to engage in a process of steps allowing them to seek out information, engage in transactions and thereby gain value from their consumer journey. However, not all desired consumption items are immediately accessible to, or realistic for, all consumers and may be deemed “unattainable” by consumers, even though they are also desired and explored via the imagination. Thus, might it be possible for some consumer journeys to exist solely in the mind of the consumer?

This dissertation conceptualizes how consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences to create alternative consumer journeys for desired yet unattainable consumption items by integrating prior literature. Evidence derived from exploratory interviews suggests consumers do explore their desired yet unattainable consumption items through imagination, prompting three successive research questions that are the focus of this dissertation. First, when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? Second, when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? And, third, what outcomes do consumers gain from creating alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable?

Empirical testing of the extended conceptual framework includes a consumer survey, interviews and experimental designs. When consumers identify desired consumption items as unattainable, they are likely to increase their engagement in activities which support and coincide with imaginative mental experience engagement. The imaginative mental experiences consumers create involve an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience. Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers who find their desired consumption to be unattainable the ability to create alternative consumer journeys. This dissertation contributes an augmented understanding of the consumer journey
framework by suggesting imagination as an important touchpoint of consumer journeys. As well, this thesis contributes an understanding of the outcomes consumers can experience relating to their imaginative exploration of desired, yet unattainable, consumption items even though they are not engaging in consumption at this time.
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Glossary

Consumption – process of acquiring, using and disposing of goods within the marketplace.

Consumption desire – an object or experience that one wishes to exchange money for within the marketplace.

Consumption dreaming – mental representations of what is desired through engaging in consumption.

Consumption experiences – a hedonic and value-based understanding of consumption that includes abstract elements influencing the entire experience of consumption.

Consumption goal – cognitive focus on a future action or event directly related to a consumption desire.

Consumer journey – cumulative understanding of all touchpoints consumers experience through totality of pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages of consumption.

Consumption visions – imaginative exploration of consequences of actual product use.

Daydreaming – an imaginative activity that allows individuals a visual reprieve from their actual surroundings.

Experiential marketing – subjective instances involving marketer-influences on the consumption experience.

Fantasy – thoughts and images based on the mind’s eye and may or may not be likely to occur in reality.

Imagination – activities that allow individuals to full blank spaces and build connections through the employment of imagery to create pleasurable experiences in the mind.

Imaginative Mental Experiences – an immersive exploration of the experiences consumers wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience.

Mental imagery – sensory dimensions and visualizations relevant to specific consumption items.

Pre-Purchase Touchpoints – aspects which may contribute to or inform consumers about their consumption experience during the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey.

Savoring – purposeful delaying of a consumption event that allows for the experience of mental pleasure.

Unattainable Consumption Desires – items or experiences that, while desirable, are acknowledged to be unpurchaseable in the foreseeable future, yet consumers still demonstrate hope for the possibility of consumption in the future.

Wish list – pre-purchase dreaming through confirmation of cultural expectations of specific events and holidays.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Despite consumers having to limit how many of their consumption desires they can pursue at any one time, the study of marketing places relatively little emphasis on what consumers do when they identify unattainable consumption desires. By studying how consumers approach unattainable consumption desires, a greater understanding of how consumers cope with feelings of unattainability may be gained. This dissertation examines the notion that consumers who identify desired consumption items to be unattainable create an alternative consumer journey through imaginative mental experience engagement. In this research, a specific focus on the imagination is employed; the imagination is a powerful tool that consumers may engage with in order to explore unattainable consumption desires. This research demonstrates consumers who find their desired consumption item to be unattainable gain benefits and outcomes through these alternative consumer journeys, despite not engaging in consumption at this time.

To explore how consumers gain benefits and outcomes via imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption desires, it is first important to clarify what this dissertation takes to be “unattainable consumption.” Consumers simply cannot buy everything they desire, and they must make choices between their needs and wants due to having finite resources. As well, consumers are known to be able to control their desires when many are activated (Boujbel and D’Astous 2015). Thus, “unattainable consumption” refers to those consumption items that consumers acknowledge, for whatever reason, they cannot and will not purchase for the foreseeable future yet still demonstrate hope for their desires to be realized (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003).
Second, it is necessary to articulate what this dissertation views as an “imaginative mental experience.” Building on the suggestion that consumers may have unattainable consumption desires, this research presumes consumers do not necessarily ignore their interest in desired consumption items they view as unattainable. Consumers have the ability to engage in imagination to “fill blank spaces” (Zaltman 2016) and consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable may therefore engage in imaginative mental experiences in order to fill the spaces their unattainable consumption desires occupy in their mind’s eye. This research defines imaginative mental experiences as an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience. (Additional key term definitions are found in the Glossary, p. xi.)

Work in the marketing literature suggests imagination should be an important component of consumption processes (Coulter 2016; Zaltman 2016), yet the role of the imagination within the marketing literature and our understanding of consumption is underexplored. Further, consumers who identify “unattainable” consumption desires have not been accounted for in the present conceptualization of consumer journeys and consumption processes; consumers are thought to have desires, and to enact pursuit of those desires without consideration of the possibility that consumers cannot and will not always choose to do so. If consumers are able to gain benefits and outcomes from their imaginative mental experiences when desired consumption is unattainable, this research offers a new way of examining those desires consumers deem to be unattainable, reflecting a broader understanding of the ways in which consumers ultimately choose to interact with and benefit from these desires. Marketers strive to manage and encourage consumer desires, but have yet to place importance on the notion that consumers must balance their desires over a potentially long time horizon; some consumers in this research articulate that their “unattainable desires” are items they have spent many years thinking about, and expect to continue to think about these desires for many years to come. As well, many marketing efforts encourage
consumers to “imagine,” yet these efforts and their effects remain unexplored, a call that arises from this research’s findings.

Overall, this research demonstrates that the consumer’s ability to engage with the imagination, specifically when they recognize unattainable consumption desires, is an understudied yet important aspect of how consumers interact with consumptive processes generally. This research goes on to provide insights which augment the present understanding of consumption and consumption processes as well as imaginative engagement by consumers when consumers perceive desired consumption items as unattainable.

1.2 Research Purpose

The goal of this research is to understand how consumers who recognize consumption desires as unattainable engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey. This focus may allow for a greater understanding of how consumers deal with feelings of unattainability as all consumers must make choices in their consumption decisions; it is impossible for all consumers to have everything they desire.

Supporting this inquiry, is the understanding that the connections between the imagination and marketing and consumer research are, at present, underexplored. The imagination is understood to be a pervasive and ever-present aspect of mental functioning (Schau 2000; Zaltman 2016), and many authors suggest the time is ripe for exploration of this topic as it relates to marketing and consumer behavior. Zaltman (2016) suggests it is high time to explore the role of imagination in marketing, and Pham (2013) wishes for a greater understanding of how consumers interact with the desires of which they are not actively engaging in the consumption process for – those desires we have, but haven’t acted on yet. While some attempts to highlight the role of imagination within consumption exist (Jenkins 1999; Jenkins and Molesworth 2017; Schau 1999; Spears and Yazdanparast 2014), there is a ripe opportunity to explore the
role of imagination in consumption more thoroughly to gain a greater understanding of the role imagination plays in affecting consumers’ desires, lives and understanding of marketing appeals.

Thus, founded on the suggestion that consumers may engage in imaginative mental experiences to explore unattainable consumption desires, this dissertation seeks to understand what influences a consumer to engage in imaginative mental experiences, what the experiences of an imaginative mental experience entails for consumers, and what outcomes or benefits the imaginative mental experience provides to consumers.

1.2.1 Research Questions

To explore how consumers who identify consumption desires as unattainable engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey, this research investigates three questions:

1) When consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences?

2) When consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences?

3) Through engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is unattainable, what outcomes do consumers gain?

Question 1 examines the relevant antecedents that encourage consumers’ engagement in imaginative mental experiences. Specific attention is paid to the role of perceptions of unattainability as well as the vividness of existing mental images, which the conceptual framework suggests are integral to the imaginative mental experience itself. Additionally, self-concept perceptions is examined here, as the role consumption plays within self-concept development is theorized to be central to the desired yet unattainable items consumers choose to focus on. Question 1, therefore, investigates the specific relationships between perceptions of unattainability, perceptions that the desired item will enhance the self-concept and the vividness of existing mental images in increasing imaginative mental experience engagement.
Question 2 explores the actual experiences of the imaginative mental experiences consumers create, as this dissertation’s conceptual framework suggests engaging in imaginative mental experiences can offer the opportunity to create an alternative consumer journey. This points to the possibility that imaginative mental experiences offer consumers consumption experiences even though they are not engaging in all stages of the consumer journey at this time.

Question 2 focuses on the possibility that as consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, their desired future consumption experiences become clearer and that consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences may increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities or not. The latter suggestion is important as the imagination offers the possibility to explore the impossible, and whether consumers recognize this distinction may affect their own benefits and outcomes from the imaginative mental experiences they create.

Question 3 examines the suggestion that when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption desires, there are potential outcomes or benefits to be gained by consumers. As this research suggests that imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption items may allow consumers to create an alternative consumer journey, and that consumer journeys typically offer consumers the benefits of consumption, it is important to understand what, if any, benefits may arise for consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences. Even though the consumers in question are not engaging in consumption at this time, it may be possible for consumers to gain outcomes from their experiences of the imagination. Chiefly, the possibility of emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes are examined, alongside specific contexts that may apply to the experiencing of imaginative mental experiences, which arise from the findings gained throughout the research process.

1.3 Proposed Contributions

This research integrates prior literature to conceptualize imaginative mental experiences involving an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their
consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience. Imaginative mental experiences are the pre-purchase touchpoint most relevant to consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable; when consumers engage with imaginative mental experiences, they are able to create an alternative consumer journey, allowing consumers an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to occur through consumption. As not all desired consumption items are realistically attainable, this thesis explores a consumption situation faced by all consumers in some way; at this time, the marketing literature does not account for how consumers engage with desires that they are not able to pursue via traditional consumer journeys.

As well, there is an opportunity within the marketing discipline to explore how consumers interact with imagination (Coulter 2016; Pham 2013; Zaltman 2016). Through this research’s exploration of imaginative mental experiences for consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable, several contributions to consumer behavior and marketing practice are made.

1.3.1 Contribution to Consumer Behavior Theory

In conceptualizing how consumers who deem desired consumption items to be unattainable may engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey, findings of this thesis offer an augmentation of the literature’s understanding of consumption processes and consumer journeys. This augmentation captures a specific consumer situation not previously explored within the literature: not all consumers can or will be able to attain all things they desire, yet the perception that a desired item is unattainable does not necessarily diminish desire. Through the lens of the consumer journey framework (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), this research demonstrates imaginative mental experiences are a relevant touchpoint of the pre-purchase stage of consumer journeys which allow consumers the ability to explore their desired consumption experiences by creating an alternative consumer journey.

Through this understanding, this thesis contributes a new understanding of the ways in which consumers engage in many aspects of consumption, specifically how consumers who perceive
consumption desires as unattainable are able to engage in relevant touchpoints to create alternative consumer journeys, even though they are not able to proceed through all stages of the traditional consumer journey.

As well, this thesis contributes to the emerging discussion of the imagination within marketing and consumer behavior. Consumers likely apply their imagination to many different consumption scenarios, and this dissertation’s findings demonstrate the ways in which consumers engage in imagination even when consumption is deemed unattainable, contributing to the discussion of imagination within marketing and consumer behavior (Coulter 2016; Pham 2013; Zaltman 2016).

1.3.2 Contributions to Marketing Practice

While the focus of this thesis is on those consumers who perceive desired consumption as unattainable, there are many contributions relevant to the practice of marketing. Chiefly, this dissertation offers a more nuanced understanding of how consumers who perceive consumption items as unattainable may be engaging in imaginative mental experiences for a very long period of time, suggesting the “desire” stage of consumption is much longer than perhaps what marketing managers presently recognize it to be. Thus, marketing managers may undertake greater efforts to understand how to both assist consumers in transitioning from the “potential” consumer stage to the “actual” consumer stage and how to communicate with consumers who desire but cannot presently consume. This dissertation’s findings may also help extend marketing research efforts that explore why or why not consumers are able to purchase, as typical market research strategies often focus on those consumers who have become customers, rather than asking non-consumers why they remain non-consumers, despite desiring their offerings.

Imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption items have the potential to offer consumers many benefits and outcomes, which suggests that while consumers are not consuming their desired items, there are likely connections between the imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption items and the ongoing consumption decisions consumers make each and every day. Managers can incorporate these understandings within their marketing efforts and tactics that
communicate to consumers, potentially prompting engagement in imagination to help consumers fan the flames of desire for what may become possible at a point in the future.

While imaginative mental experiences offer consumers immersive explorations of their desired consumption, the experiences consumers create may deviate greatly from the actual experiences they may have if they are to consume. While findings demonstrate consumers plainly understand discrepancies exist, marketers are the caretakers of consumer experience in the marketplace and can incorporate these understandings within the consumption experiences they manage and oversee, potentially bridging the gap between the imagination and reality for more productive consumer experiences.

1.4 Summary

Consumers have no choice but to limit how many of their consumption desires they pursue at any given time – they simply cannot have it all. But, this research demonstrates that even though consumers cannot “have it all,” they can imaginatively explore the things they recognize as unattainable by creating an alternative consumer journey. This research demonstrates that through their imaginative mental experiences, consumers stand to gain both emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes. Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers an alternative consumer journey that allows consumers to gain an experience of their desired consumption via their imagination. This research offers a conceptual framework for imaginative mental experiences as a pre-purchase touchpoint that allows consumers to create an alternative consumer journey, and provides a test of the proposed propositions and hypotheses through three research studies designed and executed in an iterative fashion. First, a consumer survey; second, critical incident technique interviews; and third, experimental designs. Taken together, this dissertation provides support for the suggestion that consumers who desire unattainable consumption items may create an alternative consumer journey – a journey of the imagination.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and explained the purpose of this dissertation research as illustrated through three research questions. Chapter 2 provides an integrated literature review outlining the present understanding of consumption processes, and
consumer journeys as well as the imagination, daydreaming, fantasy. Chapter 2 further suggests imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to create an alternative consumer journey, an involve many pre-purchase touchpoints and are likely experienced within the pre-purchase stage of the current conceptualization of consumer journeys. Chapter 3 encompasses the initial conceptual development and exploratory consumer interviews which support the initial conceptual development. Chapter 4 provides the extended conceptual framework which is elucidated by propositions and hypotheses of interest. Chapter 5 presents the research rationale and describes the methods used within this research. Chapter 6 then recounts the findings of each of the three research studies. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation through a discussion of the contributions of this research to consumer behavior and marketing theory and marketing practice. The limitations of this research, as well as future research suggestions are also outlined.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This research suggests consumers who find their desired consumption to be unattainable benefit from engaging in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey. This literature review first places these ideas in context defining both unattainable consumption as well as imaginative mental experiences. Following this is a discussion of various possible antecedents of imaginative mental experiences. Next, literature discussing consumption, consumption experiences and consumer journeys provides a foundation for informing this research’s conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers to create an alternative consumer journey. Within this section, the overarching structures of consumption, consumption experiences and consumer journeys are discussed, and imaginative mental experiences are placed within the pre-purchase stage of consumer journeys. To support this notion, various pre-purchase touchpoints which are relevant and informative to consumers who view their desired consumption as unattainable are also discussed. Pre-purchase touchpoints are those aspects which may contribute to or inform consumers about their consumption experience during the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. Finally, the literature’s understanding of central components of imaginative mental experiences, including imagination, fantasy, and daydreaming behaviors are discussed. This chapter then concludes with a summary.

2.1 Key Definitions

This research is predicated on the development of two ideas: first, that consumers recognize certain desired consumption items as unattainable, and second, that consumers can engage in the imagination via imaginative mental experiences to explore their unattainable yet desired consumption items. While the following sections of this literature review develops these ideas more fully, overview definitions of these two concepts are first provided for clarity. A full list of key terms relating to this thesis can be found in the Glossary (p. xi).
2.1.1 Unattainable Consumption

Consumers cannot purchase everything they desire. They must make choices between needs and wants every day within the marketplace due to finite resources. However, consumers, at any time, may recognize a desired consumption item as “unattainable;” they know they would like to have the desired item, but also understand that, at this time, they cannot and will not engage in purchasing the desired item for the foreseeable future. Consumers may evaluate many things in determining whether something is “unattainable;” the item itself, when in the future they may be able to purchase the item (if ever), the circumstances required to purchase the item (e.g., different life stage), or what needs to change to be able to purchase the item (e.g., earning more by changing jobs). Although unattainable consumption desires are not explicitly explored in the literature, Boujbel and d’Astous (2015) acknowledge that when a variety of different desires are activated, many reasons may lead consumers to control these desires. Thus, consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable also typically acknowledge, for whatever reason, they cannot and will not purchase the desired item for the foreseeable future.

Consumers often desire consumption items they acknowledge as unattainable, but still engage in imagining the experience that may occur if they were able to attain their desires, as consumers still maintain optimism and hope for something to change and allow their desires to be realized. As well, consumers who have knowledge of a desired consumption item may find their curiosity piqued (Litman, Hutchins, and Russon 2005; Loewenstein 1994), enticing them to engage with imagination. Typically, consumers who see their desired consumption items as out of reach for the foreseeable future are thought to be unable to engage in consumer journeys, an assumption that is challenged within this research.

It is known that consumers engage in consumption for many different purposes in their lives depending on their needs, desires and wants at a given time (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Moskowitz and Grant 2009). Consumers engage in consumption for many more reasons than just the attainment of consumption items, including, but not limited to, simply experiencing the feelings and the enjoyment associated with consuming (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). However, as mentioned earlier, consumers
constantly prioritize various consumption wants, needs and desires as they typically do not have the resources to pursue every possible, wished for, consumption experience. Even when consumers do attain their consumption desires, in certain circumstances, consumers may find their desired consumption items are “too pretty” to use, diminishing actual engagement with their consumption desires (Wu et al. 2017).

There are many possible influencing factors affecting consumers’ perceptions of unattainable consumption items. While financial constraints obviously prevent consumers from engaging in consumption, a consumer’s perception of unattainability may be more nuanced. Consumers are known to engage in consumption for a variety of reasons in addition to basic need satisfaction, including self-concept development (Belk 1988; Goffman 1978; Landon Jr 1974), development of status (Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010), participation in brand communities (Muniz, Jr. and O’Guinn 2001; Thompson and Sinha 2008), and developing feelings of fantasies and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Many of the reasons for which consumers engage in consumption may also be linked to their perceptions of why a consumption desire is presently unattainable. Presently, marketing research overlooks those who desire to consume but perceive their consumption desires as unattainable, as well as why these desires are unattainable.

Prior research discussing consumers who intend to consume something but either ignore consumption possibilities or actively resist engaging in consumption through market transactions may be said to engage in “non-consumption” (Gould, Houston, and Mundt 1997; Stammerjohan and Webster 2002). Consumers experiencing non-consumption are therefore those who are actively avoiding engaging with their consumption desires so that they may either decrease their desire for a consumption object or to avoid the perceived consequences of consumption. This understanding of non-consumption is derived from research exploring consumers who try to consume but sometimes fail to realize their goal of consumption (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990). In contrast, this dissertation research focuses specifically on consumers who recognize their consumption desires as unattainable at the present time. While these consumers are not striving to meet their consumption goals at this time (due to their admission of unattainability), these consumers do in fact maintain hope for the possibility of consumption in the future.
This sense of hope is consistent with the desire literature, which suggests that without hope, desire fizzes (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003).

2.1.2 Imaginative Mental Experiences

The second concept to define, and which is further developed throughout the remainder of this chapter, is imaginative mental experiences. Building on the suggestion that consumers may sometimes perceive their desired consumption items as unattainable, this research suggests these consumers do not necessarily ignore their interest in desired consumption. In fact, this research demonstrates consumers often explore their unattainable consumption desires through their imagination, which Zaltman (2016) refers to as a pervasive yet unnoticed everyday occurrence. For consumers who perceive desired consumption as unattainable, imaginative mental experiences may offer consumers the ability to imaginatively explore their consumption desires through the creation of an alternative consumer journey. This suggestion builds upon the understanding that consumers have long been known to engage in consumption for the benefits of fantasy creation and feelings of fun (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), yet exploration of how consumers engage in the imagination in the absence of actually engaging in consumption is not yet the subject of empirical exploration. In support of this research, many calls exist within the marketing discipline to more thoroughly understand the broad role of imagination as part of consumption (Coulter 2016; Jenkins and Molesworth 2017; Zaltman 2016) as well as to explore how consumers manage desires (Pham 2013).

While the imagination is discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter, it is important to recognize that the imagination can be thought of as a fundamental everyday intellectual practice (Schau 2000). And while imagination may be an underlying construct of consumption (Schau 2000), it has been suggested that using imagination to construct fantasies may be an end in itself rather than a step towards actual consumption (Campbell 1987). In this research, imaginative mental experiences involve an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience. To support these central
definitions, this chapter proceeds with an exploration of the topic of consumption more broadly, beginning with a discussion of selected consumption antecedents. As suggested previously, consumers engage in consumption for many more reasons than to simply fulfil needs; the next section focuses on reviewing select antecedents of consumption experiences – consumption desires, consumption goals, self-concept development, status perceptions and curiosity – that relate to the central topic of this thesis: imaginative mental experiences. Discussing these antecedents provides insights as to how consumers who find their desired consumption to be unattainable may partake in touchpoints of consumer journeys.

2.2 Relevant Consumption Antecedents

Consumers require some form of motivation to engage in consumption experiences, or in the case of this dissertation research, they require motivation to engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey. The underlying assumption as to why consumers engage in consumption is to gain basic need and want fulfillment (Holbrook 1987). However, by understanding consumption as experiences and interactions that are immersive and thematic, “why” consumers consume becomes incredibly nuanced, with increasing possibilities as to why consumers engage in consumption. The “need” consumers fulfill through imaginative mental experiences is not possession or actual experience of the item, but perhaps is a “need” for an immersive and engaging experience of the imagination. Engagement in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption items is not necessarily driven by desire for actual consumption, but is driven by desire for the feelings surrounding what it might be like to own or experience their desired consumption.

Although the literature speaks to desires and goals from different perspectives, both literatures share similarities in how consumers take actions on their desires and goals to gain benefits via consumption, thus, this section reviews how desires and goals are relevant in the formation of imaginative mental experiences. In addition to reviewing consumption desires and goals, this section then discusses three specific antecedents that may precede consumption engagement. First, self-concept development, second, increasing status perceptions, and third, engaging with curiosity. Each of these speaks to potential
reasons “why” consumers may be inspired to explore unattainable consumption desires through their imagination. While there are many other antecedents that inform engagement in consumption and consumer journeys, the purpose of this section is to understand what influences are most relevant in helping consumers begin their imaginative mental experience.

2.2.1 Consumption Desires

The concept of desire and its relation to consumption is discussed throughout many historical marketing texts. As early marketing scholars attempt to understand the “why” of consumption, desires are thought to relate to ego, or social pressures (Frank 1935), or may arise relative to past purchase or situational factors, such as gaining a sizable salary increase (Dichter 1960). Other suggestions as to the origin of desire are made; several point to desires as part of human nature’s biologically driven forces supported and influenced by contemporary culture (Dichter 1960), as well as influences from close others (e.g., friends and family) and distant others (e.g., celebrities) (Cocanougher and Bruce 1971). While the origin of the concept of desire is not the subject of examination here, the notion consumers can engage with their desires via the imagination is relevant.

Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey experience desire as a strong longing or wishing for something that may be ever-changing (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 1996). In contrast to desires, Belk et al. (2003) suggest needs are accompanied by a rationale while desires represent hopes and hope may lead to motivation. An additional difference Belk et al. (2000) highlight between needs and desires is the perception that needs originate internally while desires originate externally. Overall, desires are posited to be a social and personal construction that do not require rationalization, whereas needs do require rationalizations (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2000). This suggests desires allow consumers to explore consumption possibilities unencumbered by rationalizations or reasons. This exploration may therefore be accomplished through imaginative mental experiences.
Broadly, desire is described as a cyclical emotion that creates both discomfort and pleasure (Campbell 1987), but is only maintained when hope is present (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Interestingly, when desired objects are more difficult to obtain, desire is said to increase, although once an object is thought to be beyond hope or acquisition is not possible, desire ceases (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Thus, consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption items maintain hope for the eventual possibility of consumption in the future, fueling their desire. Consumers may enact imaginative mental experiences as an enjoyable and beneficial imaginative experience of their desires, as a stand-alone experience of their desires. While consumption desires represent cyclical emotional experiences, which may inspire imaginative mental experiences, consumption goals focus on a more concrete desired end state, which may also motivate consumers to engage in imaginative mental experiences.

2.2.2 Consumption Goals

While desires typically indicate a strong longing for something, goals are a cognitive focus on future actions or events (Elliot and Niesta 2009) which may represent pleasurable experiences individuals intend to attain through engaging in actions (Kruglanski and Kopetz 2009). Thus, when consumers desire something, their goal may be to attain the object of their desire in real life, or their goal may be less specific – perhaps they simply want to know more about their desired consumption, or to understand what their desired consumption experiences could be like – which may allow consumers to access pleasurable experiences via imaginative mental experiences.

The psychology literature focuses on goal creation, goal adoption, and goal pursuit as a means to understand human actions and behaviors. Goals offer a focus on a future possibility and the pursuit of the goal is based on the image of the future that guides present behavior (Elliot and Niesta 2009). The concept of goals may allow for a framework to understand how consumers develop consumption expectations as well as how consumers gain the consumption experiences they desire. As goals allow consumers to connect with their wants to direct their consumption behavior (Moskowitz and Grant 2009),
it is conceivable that consumption goals may not always be aimed at actual consumption or physical possession of the item, but instead may be directed to imaginative mental experiences as a way to achieve goals pertaining to experiencing imagination. The process of engaging with goals is referred to as “goal pursuit” and many psychology researchers suggest goal pursuit involves both purposeful and conscious behaviors as well as unconscious behaviors (Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Fitzsimons et al. 2002).

According to the goal literature, higher levels of engagement may be possible when goals are harder to reach (Locke and Latham 2006). This interpretation may have positive implications for imaginative mental experiences; for consumers who justify their engagement in imaginative mental experiences due to desired consumption seeming unattainable – automatically making consumption a difficult goal to accomplish – consumers may gain a pleasurable experience of the imagination as part of their goal pursuit towards consumption. Finally, greater specificity of the goal may also contribute to higher task performance (Locke and Latham 2006), thus, as a desired consumption experience becomes more clearly articulated, the imaginative mental experience may become more engaging.

When consumers intend to act on their desires through consumption, they may develop future expectations of consumption that facilitate their goal creation, goal adoption, and goal achievement. Research in psychology offers a number of theories as to the formation of future expectations, including the role of self-efficacy beliefs in determining motivation levels (Bandura 1989), how consumers construe both near- and far-term events (Lee et al. 2017; Liberman and Trope 1998; Yan, Sengupta, and Hong 2016), and the impact of varying levels of self-determination on goal pursuit (Deci and Ryan 2000). Thus, there are many influencing factors that consumers may implicitly or explicitly take into consideration when creating future expectations of desired consumption. These theories broadly suggest consumers are constantly developing consumption needs, wants, and expectations, informed by a variety of influences.

Consumption desires and goals are often influenced by many factors, and while this research focuses on recognizing desires and goals as the context for imaginative mental experiences to arise, many additional influences may affect the knowledge and experience consumers have which may inform their imaginative mental experiences. This section proceeds by discussing three additional antecedents that
may influence a consumer’s engagement in imaginative mental experiences. First, self-concept development as a goal consumers strive for through gaining possession of specific goods; second, the desire to increase status perceptions through consumption as possession of specific goods often offers status to consumers; and third, curiosity, which may inspire consumers towards imaginative mental experiences due to the cognitive deprivation that a curious consumer experiences in relation to their consumption desires. Each of these three specific consumption antecedents contribute to this research’s understanding of how consumers may arrive at engaging in imaginative mental experiences.

2.2.3 Self-Concept Development

Consumers who engage in consumption or imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey may be doing so to express desires or goals that relate to self-concept development. Although how consumers enhance their self-concept is not the focus of this research, consumers are known to engage in consumption in order to develop or enhance their own perceptions of the self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967); thus, a brief discussion of how self-concept development relates to consumers formation of consumption desires and consumption goals is warranted.

Individuals aim to express the most idealized presentation of the self to others via consumption for a variety of reasons that may include: social mobility, responding to social cues, and a desire to be thought of in a specific way by others (Goffman 1978). Many scholars agree that a consumer’s self-concept is comprised of an ideal self-concept and an actual self-concept, where the ideal self-concept is aspirational and the actual self-concept is more reflective of a consumer’s present understanding of their actual self (Birdwell 1968; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Landon Jr 1974; Ross 1971). The ideal and actual self-concept may be positively correlated, as consumers attempt to work towards their self-concept by engaging in consumption and consumer journeys.

An individual’s self-concept forms through interactions with other individuals and consuming goods that serve as social symbols or communication develops for the individual (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). By consuming an object’s symbolic properties, the individual integrates the self with the object in
order to convey meaning to others or elicit reactions from others, impacting the interaction they have with
others, and again impacting the self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Holt 1995).

The self-concept represents one’s understanding of their actual self (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967), and the self-concept may be influenced by consumption experiences as the literature suggests consumption and consumption experiences involve interactions that contribute to self-concept development (Belk 1988; Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982; Deutsch and Theodorou 2010; Ross 1971). Thus, it is conceivable that when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences these experiences may be viewed as an alternative way to gain experiences that explore or contribute to self-expression and self-concept development.

Belk (1988) proposes the things we own are extensions of our self, depicting a strong relationship between the possessions of an individual and how that individual incorporates those possessions into their conceptualizations of the self. Thus, a consumer’s attempt to develop the extended self informs their consumption desires or goals, even if the desired possession is not actually owned by the individual, allowing imaginative mental experiences to assist consumers in their consumption goals.

Exploring consumption desires and goal formation from the consumer culture theory perspective, the concept of identity play suggests consumers contemplate reformations of the self while making conscious choices about what identity they wish to pursue assisted by acts of consumption (Schouten 1991). Specifically, Schouten’s (1991) research examines how symbolic consumer behaviors play a role in the maintenance or reconstruction of the self-concept through the context of plastic surgery. Schouten (1991) describes the process of identity reconstruction as one that involves separating from a role, relationship or component of the extended self, and then engaging in reconstructing the self-concept through the creation of possible selves through identity play. Thus, as consumers pursue identity changes, their desires and goals may evolve to desire specific consumption outcomes. Consumers may create consumption desires or goals driven by needs related to the self-concept or identity of the individual and may be relevant in the development of imaginative mental experiences. Closely related to self-concept
development through consumption is the idea of increasing status through consumption, which is discussed below.

2.2.4 Status Perceptions

Another possible contributing factor for consumption desires or goal creation may be related to status or perceptions of status that may be achieved through consumption. Consumers may desire consumption items due to the status associated with specific consumption items. Not all consumption items may be perceived to impart status on the consumer; however, consumption items visible to others do allow others to infer status (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982).

Status is widely understood to apply to the social ranking an individual is perceived to have amongst a group (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982; Zeleny 1940) and contributes to how people are evaluated and rewarded (Mark, Smith-Lovin, and Ridgeway 2009). Although some authors suggest status goods have lost their ability to signal status over time as a result of various cultural and historical factors, including counterfeiting (Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010), the perception that ownership of consumption items may impart status on the owner is well documented in the consumption literature. Research by Han et al. (2010) demonstrates counterfeits are typically associated with “loud” products (i.e., large brand symbols visible to others), as opposed to “quiet” products (i.e., inconspicuous brand markings), and that high status consumption is still possible through quiet products. Thus, as consumers develop consumption desires and goals, perceptions of the status a specific consumption good or experience offers a consumer may help shape specific consumption desires or consumption goals, and, in situations of unattainability, lead to the engagement of imaginative mental experiences regarding desired status perceptions. While perceptions of status concentrate on an understood social ranking within a group, it is possible that more general information regarding a desired consumption item is sought simply because a consumer is curious. Thus, curiosity and its ability to precede imaginative mental experience engagement is discussed below.
2.2.5 Curiosity

Consumers with unattainable consumption desires may have feelings of curiosity relating to the consumption experiences they wish to have. Curiosity is referred to the cognitive deprivation arising from the gap between what one knows and what one wants to know (Loewenstein 1994) and feelings of curiosity motivate consumers to seek missing information (Litman, Hutchins, and Russon 2005; Wang and Huang 2018). Generally, curiosity is thought to be understudied in the consumer domain (Wang and Huang 2018). However, curiosity may provide the impetus for consumers to engage with the imagination to fill gaps in their understanding and to specifically explore unattainable consumption desires.

For consumers who find themselves feeling curious about their desires, they may be motivated to gain more information on their desired consumption items; acquiring knowledge when feelings of curiosity have been aroused can be both rewarding and pleasurable (Loewenstein 1994). One way a consumer’s curiosity might be piqued involves viewing advertisements and encountering marketer-driven stimuli. It is possible that many types of marketer-driven stimuli contribute to feelings of curiosity arising (in addition to potentially fostering desire creation and goal articulation). Marketer-driven stimuli, such as advertising, visual promotional materials and branded content helps facilitate the understanding consumers have of their desired consumption and enhance what consumers know about various consumption items, potentially influencing ongoing feelings of curiosity towards an unattainable consumption desire.

Marketing and advertising efforts that brands produce in an effort to entice consumers can enhance a consumer’s stored imagery related to the brand (Block and Keller 1997; Phillips 1996). As advertising is shown to be an unavoidable part of daily life as consumer goods packaging, billboards, print advertising, commercials and online advertisements are ever-present, consumers interact with marketing and advertising efforts on a daily basis (Gibson 2005; Story 2007). Advertising and marketing offers consumers information on desirable consumption experiences without consumers expending much effort to seek out information, and allows firms a touchpoint to many potential consumers. Thus, as
consumers experience marketing and advertising efforts, imagery stored in memory is enhanced, and may therefore increase feelings of curiosity, potentially stimulating consumer’s exploration of their desired consumption items through the imagination.

While there are many ways for consumers to generate consumption desires and there are many influences that may impact why a consumer desires a specific consumption item, the discussion of this section aims to outline central antecedents relevant to generating a theory of imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers to create an alternative consumer journey. Now that influences preceding consumer engagement in consumption have been discussed, this chapter proceeds with a review of literature discussing consumption, consumption experiences and the evolution of these topics towards consumer journeys. These three ideas encompass the evolving understanding of consumption as captured throughout the marketing literature and this discussion allows for imaginative mental experiences to be understood as a relevant pre-purchase touchpoint consumers may engage with to create an alternative consumer journey.

2.3 Consumption, Consumption Experiences and Consumer Journeys

To conceptualize imaginative mental experiences as a pre-purchase touchpoint that allows consumers to create an alternative consumer journey, it is important to understand the basic conceptualization of consumption, as well as traditional consumption experiences and their evolution in thought to consumer journeys. While imaginative mental experiences involve an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires via a consumers’ imagination, consumption is traditionally conceptualized as the acquisition, use and disposal of products that provide value to the consumer via market transactions (Holbrook 1987; MacInnis and Folkes 2010; Nicosia and Mayer 1976). As the main topic of consumer behavior research (MacInnis and Folkes 2010), the study and understanding of consumption has evolved over time to both encompass the experiential aspects of consumption (Carù and Cova 2003; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999) and, most recently, a framework for consumption through the lens of customer journeys (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). This
section’s discussion of the progression from consumption to customer journeys allows for the placement of imaginative mental experiences within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey.

2.3.1 Consumption

Consumption is recognized as the acquisition, use and disposal of products that provide value to consumers (Holbrook 1987; Nicosia and Mayer 1976); this understanding implicitly assumes consumers must directly interact with consumption items. Literature speaking to “acquisition” refers to making a purchase, transacting, or shopping for or searching for goods (Babin et al. 1994; Campbell 1987; MacInnis and Price 1987; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995; Shiv and Huber 2000). Over time, the utilitarian definition of consumption expands to include symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic elements that allow consumers to pursue fantasies, feelings and fun (Holbrook et al. 1984; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Thus, as the understanding of consumption broadens to encompass more than just market transactions, the ways in which consumption creates value for consumers broadens. Consumption therefore offers many things to consumers, including among other things: emotional significance (Holbrook 1997), play (Holbrook et al. 1984) participation in brand communities (Cova 1997; Muniz, Jr. and O’Guinn 2001), brand evaluations (Keller 2003, 1993), and self-concept development (Holt 1995; Ross 1971).

As the definition of consumption expanded, understandings of how consumers engage in consumption emerge. Holt (1995) categorizes consumers engagement in consumption according to four metaphors of consumption: consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as play, and consuming as classification.

Most relevant to this research’s conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences are Holt’s (1995) metaphors of “consuming as experience” and “consuming as integration.” As consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, they engage with their desires through an imaginative scenario of their desired consumption experience, consistent with Holt’s suggestion that consuming as experience involves applying interpretive frameworks during the consumption act in order to engage with the object.
Consumers may engage in accounting, or the assigning of meaning and value as well as contextualizing, evaluating and appreciating via sensory experiences to engage in consumption as an experience (Holt 1995). The second metaphor of consuming as integration suggests consumers integrate as a means to acquire and manipulate consumption object meanings through consumption rituals and the integrating of the object into the self in order to acquire the object’s symbolic properties (Holt 1995). As imaginative mental experiences are suggested to allow consumers to create an alternative consumer journey, Holt’s typology supports the notion that consumers seek a consumption-related goal and take actions to gain that experience. Following the development of Holt’s own typology within the consumption literature, various authors in the 1990s and early 2000s began to recognize the full set of actions and influences on consumption and begin exploring consumption experiences, which are discussed next.

2.3.2 Consumption Experiences and Experiential Consumption

Imaginative mental experiences encompass an immersive exploration of the experiences consumers wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience; this understanding of imaginative mental experiences builds on the understanding of consumption experiences within the literature. Consumption experiences encompass a more hedonic and value-based understanding of consumption that includes abstract elements influencing the entire experience of consumption.

Although Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) are instrumental in suggesting consumers engage in consumption in order to engage in fantasies and fun, it is not until the late 1990s that consumption experiences are discussed in greater detail in the marketing literature. For example, Schmitt (1999) takes a strategic management perspective and observes that brands are becoming experiences, altering how consumers interact with brands, and thus, how marketers must manage brand experiences for customers. Brand experiences are subjective instances that vary in intensity and strength and encompass sensations, feelings, and cognitions instantiated by brand-related stimuli, impacting consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). Marketing managers may engage consumers in brand
experiences through the use of experiential marketing, which allows marketers “to create holistic experiences that integrate individual experiences into a holistic Gestalt” (Schmitt 1999, p. 53). Marketers aim to implement experiential marketing tactics in order to offer consumers brand experiences that satisfy their need for pleasurable consumption experiences (Schmitt 1999) when consumers engage in consumption. Schmitt posits that the rise of experiential marketing is concurrent with the growing ubiquity of communication as entertainment, and suggests that by examining the experiential world of the consumer, customer experiences can be created and managed for increased business success (Schmitt 2003), a suggestion that has had powerful impacts on business management.

Integrating the sentiments of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Schmitt’s (1999) take on experiential marketing, Carù and Cova (2003) argue from the viewpoint of the consumer, suggesting experiential consumption differs from traditional consumption in that it is spread over a period of time and involves various stages which are influenced by marketing efforts. These stages include: the pre-consumption experience, the purchase experience, the core consumption experience and the remembered consumption experience (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2004; Carù and Cova 2003). More specifically, pre-consumption involves searching, planning or engaging in processes that prepare consumers for consumption prior to the actual consumption experience commencing; the purchase experience involves actual procurement, payment and the experience of engaging with the environment; and the core consumption experience involves the sensations, satisfaction and other emotive responses to actual consumption of the desired object or experience. Finally, the remembered consumption experience, or nostalgia experience, allows individuals to draw on memories and other materials, such as photographs, to engage in reliving a past experience.

Carù and Cova (2003) suggest all “experiences” are related to everyday experiences and allow the development of identities, consistent with the notions that consumption can enhance and develop a consumer’s own self-concept perceptions (Landon Jr 1974; Ross 1971). Thus, consumption experiences enhance a consumer’s ability to expand their identities, produce meaning and immerse themselves with thematic settings rather than just to encounter final products (Carù and Cova 2007). Although the
immersion in a consumption experience is highly influenced by the consumer, it must be noted that firms create and manage the experiential context that consumers experience (Carù and Cova 2007; Schmitt 2003), allowing co-creation between the firm and the consumer, creating powerful and personally significant experiences for the consumer within the themed consumption environment (Sherry, Jr., Kozinets, and Borghini 2007; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Imaginative mental experiences, while not involving engaging with the desired consumption item, involve an immersive exploration of the experiences consumers wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and experience and may offer consumers powerful and personally significant experiences that are more heavily weighted on the influence of the consumer.

Another viewpoint to consider in understanding consumption experiences is McCracken’s theory of displaced meanings. McCracken (1988) assumes consumers focus on consumption as a cultural process in which consumers use the meaning of goods to express their principles, construct their self-identity, and to sustain their chosen lifestyles. The theory of displaced meaning suggests consumer goods are strictly “bridges” consumers use to connect to their hopes and ideals. Consumption goods act as bridges when they are not yet owned but consumers engage in making anticipatory purchases (McCracken 1988). Each anticipatory purchase allows individuals to acquire items that allow them to experience a small part of the lifestyle they aspire to and desire. In other words, these purchases act as a “rehearsal” or “consumption in training” for the overall desired lifestyle (McCracken 1988).

Most relevant to the conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences is the theory of displaced meaning’s understanding of desired objects that are viewed as presently unattainable. McCracken (1988) suggests that when consumers desire objects that are currently unattainable, consumers displace the meaning of their ideals to a future point in time. This involves a deliberate removal of cultural meaning, which is purposefully relocated to a distance cultural domain. Thus, by imagining the possibility of consuming or experiencing something desirable in the future, consumers maintain their hope for desirable yet currently unattainable goods (McCracken 1988). Thus, the theory of displaced meanings suggests consumers constantly desire what is currently unattainable, yet consumers
sustain hope for the possibility to experience their desires in the future. While this theory potentially paints a bleak picture of consumers’ constant quest to satisfy desires, it is useful in understanding how consumers manage desires and employ interim consumption experiences to strive to satisfy their desires. To bring consumption and consumption experiences together under a cohesive understanding of consumers and their interactions with consumption, the following section discusses consumer journeys.

2.3.3 Consumer Journeys

Synthesizing the staged understanding of consumption with consumption experiences, the conceptualization of customer journeys encompasses a cumulative and refreshed understanding of consumption, proposed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016). Going forward, the terminology “consumer journey” is used here as this better reflects the nature of the consumers in question – they are not necessarily becoming customers at this time and “consumer journey” better reflects the individual nature of the imaginative mental experiences consumers may embark upon. In applying an understanding of consumer journeys to the possibility consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey, a discussion of what a consumer journey encompasses is required. This dissertation research demonstrates that the opportunity exists within the consumer journey framework to further examine how consumers use specific touchpoints when they desire to consume but feel that specific consumption experiences are unattainable.

Consistent with prior conceptualizations of consumption, which suggest there are three major stages to consumption—pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2004; Carù and Cova 2007; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; MacInnis and Folkes 2010), consumer journeys are summative, encompassing “the process the customer goes through, across all stages and touchpoints which makes up the customer experience” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 7). Predicated on a consumer’s readiness to progress through the consumer journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016) the consumption and consumption experience literature (Carù and Cova 2007; Holbrook 1987; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; MacInnis and Folkes 2010; Pine and Gilmore 1999) suggests consumers
engage in consumption experiences to gain various benefits of consumption. These consumption experiences are the “cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 7), which includes not just progressing through the stages of pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase but feedback from previous experiences as well the ability for current experiences to impact future experiences. Each stage of the process is comprised of all relevant touchpoints that may impact or influence the experience of the consumer at that stage. A visual reproduction of the Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 77) is found in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Lemon and Verhoef’s (2016) Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience**

![Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience](image)

Considering consumers who perceive their consumption desires to be presently unattainable, these consumers may be able to experience the pre-purchase stage and explore relevant touchpoints within this stage of the framework, without progressing through the remaining stages of the model. Instead, this thesis explores how these consumers have the ability to create an alternative consumer journey via imaginative mental experiences.
Literature on consumer journeys tends to focus more broadly on the entire journey, but an understanding of the various stages, especially the pre-purchase stage, remains limited and does not encompass the actions, behaviors, and experiences of consumers who acknowledge their consumption desires as unattainable, nor does it account for the possibility that imagination plays a role for consumers. To address this gap, this research focuses on examining whether imaginative mental experiences, as a touchpoint of the consumer journey, allow consumers who acknowledge their desired consumption items as unattainable to explore and “experience” their consumption desires without progressing through the remaining stages of the consumer journey at this time, but instead creating an alternative consumer journey.

Arguably, there are many constructs within the marketing literature that could serve as potential touchpoints within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. Specifically, this research focuses on pre-purchase touchpoints that involve independent actions consumers engage in prior to engaging in the act of purchasing (Fournier and Guiry 1993; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). Typically, engagement in pre-purchase touchpoints is thought to improve the experience of actual consumption and potentially strengthen or improve the outcomes of consumption (MacInnis and Price 1987, 1990; Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). Given the many possible pre-purchase touchpoints in which a consumer may engage, the goal here is to develop an integrated understanding of those pre-purchase touchpoints that allow consumers to develop knowledge and experience regarding their consumption desires, specifically when the purchase stage of the consumer journey is perceived as unattainable. Central pre-purchase touchpoints of interest are discussed below, including: mental imagery, consumption visions, consumption dreaming and wish list creation.

2.3.3.1 Mental Imagery

Consumers who perceive a desired consumption item as unattainable most often have information in memory relating to this consumption item which may be comprised of facts or mental imagery. MacInnis and Price (1987) suggest that when consumers perceive risks to actual consumption, engaging
in imagery processing may allow consumers to access potential consumption outcomes. Thus, mental imagery and its role as a pre-purchase touchpoint is something consumers may draw on when they have unattainable consumption desires. Imagery is a processing model where sensory information is represented in memory (MacInnis and Price 1987). Thus, imagery is a foundational concept related to consumptive practices and mental imagery is a form of processing that consumers often engage in during the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. Imagery can be described in various ways, including as a sensory dimension (Lindauer 1972); hypothetical instantiations (Sarbin and Juhasz 1970); visualizations of a concept or relationship (Lutz and Lutz 1978), and stored mental imagery which can provide consumers with relevant knowledge they integrate within an imaginative mental experience.

Imagery-based constructs appear throughout the marketing literature including mental simulation (Escalas 2004) and vividness, the latter of which can affect consumer judgements (McGill and Anand 1989a) and enhance consumer persuasion (Block and Keller 1997). Further, Patrick et al. (2009) link feelings of regret when missing out on a consumption opportunity with mental imagery engagement. This suggests consumers who engage in mental imagery will have increased intentions to engage in consumption in the future, supporting the idea that mental imagery engagement can drive future consumption behaviors. MacInnis and Price (1990) also demonstrate that reflecting on imagery prior to a consumption experience allows for an increase in overall satisfaction with the consumption experience, regardless of whether the actual experience takes place as expected.

2.3.3.2 Consumption Visions

Related to developing mental imagery is the employment of imagery within a consumption vision. Phillips, Olson and Baumgartner (1995) suggest consumption visions are a specific way for consumers to employ specific types of mental imagery prior to engaging in consumption. Consumption visions involve imagining the consequences of actual product use and allow consumers to use imagery to understand their desired future consumption experience before embarking on consumption (Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). While consumption visions allow consumers to prepare for
consumption by concentrating on the actual experience they expect to have, this thesis suggests the imaginative mental experience consumers develop for unattainable consumption items may more broadly focus an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. Findings relating to consumption visions also suggest consumers disregard their consumption visions once consumption is enacted, as they can actually interact with the item they have purchased (Phillips 1996). The underlying assumption in the consumption visions literature is that consumers anticipate enacting consumption. That is, these visions are motivating in nature as consumers are able to anticipate the enjoyment of the interaction with the object of their desire (Phillips 1996).

2.3.3.3 Consumption Dreaming

More recently, consumption dreams, which draw on imagery to comprise mental representations of what consumers wish to realize as a result of engaging in consumption are discussed by d’Astous and Deschênes (2005). These mental representations are deliberate, consciously activated and an important aspect of how consumers construct their own reality (d’Astous and Deschênes 2005). The authors argue that consumption dreams are not goals or open-ended desires (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003) as the consumer crafts specific details of the dream specific to their existing desires or goals (d’Astous and Deschênes 2005). The authors do not view consumption dreams as part of the consumer journey but rather as a separate enactment of mental processes related to desired consumption items. However, this dissertation research demonstrates that consumers may draw on a specific consumption dream they have as the basis for engaging in imaginative mental experiences to explore a specific consumption experience in more detail. For example, a consumer may dream to be a world traveler and use an imaginative mental experience to develop an imaginative scenario regarding a desired trip to a specific desired destination.

2.3.3.4 Wish List Creation

Another way consumers may enhance their imagery development is through the creation of wish lists. Fournier and Guiry (1993) describe wish list creation as a form of “pre-purchase dreaming” that
allows consumers to articulate their desires and aspirations through the conformation of cultural expectations of wish list creation for specific occasions (e.g., Christmas, birthdays, weddings, births), and a way to engage in fantasies of future possibilities. Continuing the world traveler example from above, a consumer who dreams of being a world traveler may have a wish list, or bucket list, of locations they wish to experience over time, and can easily draw upon this list at a given moment in time. Findings from Fournier and Guiry (1993) suggest consumers enjoy wish list creation and that consumers develop clarified imagery as part of the wish list creation process. Imagery, therefore, can take many forms and can influence what a consumer knows about a desired consumption item.

2.3.3.5 Conclusion

The consumer journey framework provides a structure for understanding the stages consumers experience when engaging in consumption. Through this lens, the imaginative mental experiences discussed in this thesis act as a relevant pre-purchase touchpoint for consumers who find their desired consumption to be unattainable. Within the pre-purchase stage of consumer journeys, many other touchpoints are relevant to informing the knowledge and experience consumers may draw on in their creation and engagement in imaginative mental experiences, and several have been discussed here. Thus, imaginative mental experiences may act as a touchpoint of the consumer journey for consumers who have unattainable consumption desires and who may then create an alternative consumer journey. In the next section, relevant marketing literature pertaining to topics surrounding imagination, fantasy creation, daydreaming and savoring are discussed to support the conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences as a major touchpoint allowing consumers to create an alternative consumer journey when consumption experiences are perceived as unattainable.

2.4 Imaginative Mental Experiences

Based on the understanding of consumption and consumer journeys, this section reviews literature in support of the conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences as a pre-purchase
touchpoint that allows consumers with unattainable desires to create an alternative consumer journey. This section proceeds with a discussion of how marketing presently views imagination, followed by a discussion of consumer engagement in fantasy creation and daydreaming activities, and concludes with a discussion of savoring behaviors which are often employed by consumers to bridge the gap between anticipating and experiencing consumption. Each of these topics lends insights to the understanding of imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers who perceive their desired consumption items to be unattainable to create an alternative consumer journey.

2.4.1 Imagination

The foundation of imaginative mental experiences rests on imagination. But, what exactly is the imagination? Understanding what the imagination is and how marketing addresses this topic is central to the discussion of how the imagination is employed within imaginative mental experiences. In this section, several topics relating to imagination and imaginative engagement and what prior research finds relating to these topics are discussed.

Presently, the discipline of marketing does not have an accepted view of imagination. Calls to explore the topic of the imagination as it relates to marketing practice and consumer research suggest there is an opportunity to understand the centrality of imagination to the discipline of marketing (Zaltman 2016) and to employ imagination in the development of marketing thought (Coulter 2016). Most recently and notably, Jenkins and Molesworth (2017) make the suggestion that imagination is a significant activity for individual’s own experiences, yet this suggestion is not well developed within the marketing literature. Jenkins and Molesworth’s (2017) work focuses their exploration of the imagination as part of future-oriented consumption and they offer a framework of consumption within the imagination. While valuable, this framework suggests consumption fully resides within the imagination, rather than examining how engaging in imagination impacts consumption and consumer journeys.

Zaltman (2016) suggests all consumers have the capacity to engage in imagination on a regular basis. In his opinion, imagination is what fills the “blank spaces” and offers connections. Creating an
imaginative experience in the mind likely involves the exploration of blank spaces through which consumers bring forward mental imagery stored in memory to create pleasurable experiences in the mind (Campbell 1987; Woods 1981). Thus, engaging in imaginative mental experiences involves creating experiences that offer consumers pleasure, within an immersive exploration of the experiences consumers wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. While connections between imagination and consumer behavior as sparse in the marketing literature, consumers are understood to engage in related behaviors of fantasy creation, daydreaming and savoring, which are described next.

2.4.2 Fantasy Creation

Fantasy creation offers a way for consumers to contrast fantastical thoughts in comparison to actual expectations of the future (Oettingen 1999). Consumers are thought to be able to distinguish between expectations and fantasies, thus, expectations are described as judgments of how likely a certain future outcome is to occur, while fantasies involve thoughts and images based on the mind’s eye and may or may not be likely to occur in reality (Oettingen 1999; Oettingen and Stephens 2009). Oettingen (1999) conceptualizes three ways in which individuals may deal with fantasies about the future. Individuals may contrast the fantasy with negative aspects of their impending reality, transforming the desired future into a necessity, which involves changing the immediate future to fulfill the desired fantasy. In this instance, consumers may change their fantasies into expectations and engage in actual consumption. More appropriate to imaginative mental experiences is the second way Oettingen (1999) suggests consumer may engage with fantasies – consumers may be able to continue indulging in positive fantasies while disregarding impending realities so that the individual enjoys the fantasy without impending actual goals or actions. Thus, consumers may create imaginative mental experiences that are based in fantasy in order to obtain some outcomes from imaginative mental experiences, in lieu of actually experiencing their desired consumption. Finally, individuals may dwell on negative aspects of the impending reality, and discontinue fantasies about the future due to the unlikely possibility of fantasy realization. In this third approach, consumers miss out on the opportunity to explore their fantasies in a productive, satisfying
manner, which may be akin to avoiding consumption experiences altogether (Gould, Houston, and Mundt 1997; Stammerjohan and Webster 2002).

Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers a way to employ fantasy creation insofar that they explore a desired future, whether or not that future is realistic. Imaginative mental experiences may therefore be satisfying in and of themselves, contributing support for this thesis’s suggestion that imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the ability to create an alternative consumer journey as a standalone experience. Oettingen and Mayer (2002) discuss the possibility that consumers engage in their own fantasies for enjoyment in the here and now and Leonard (2005) implies consumers can enjoy fantasies whether or not they materialize, both of which support the suggestion that imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to explore an ongoing fantasy-like experience of the desired consumption in a manner that may be highly satisfying, despite not pursuing consumption at this time.

2.4.3 Daydreaming

Another informative topic closely related to imagination and fantasy creation is daydreaming. Daydreaming is an activity that allows individuals a visual reprieve from their actual surroundings (Anderson 1983; Campbell 1987; Fournier and Guiry 1993). As imagination allows individuals endless possibilities for image creation within the mind, daydreaming becomes an extension of these images in a story-like, or cohesive experience in and of itself, fostering an elaborated and highlight engaging experience, thought to be part of imaginative mental experiences. Daydreaming is a way to employ imagination and allows consumers to conceptualize the experience they desire, possibly feeling as if the experience of the daydream is vivid, realistic, and ultimately, an experience that allows consumers an enjoyable “consumption experience” in lieu of actually progressing through to the purchase stage of the consumer journey. Campbell (1987) suggests daydreaming allows for the process of desiring to be pleasurable in and of itself as it is a state of “enjoyable discomfort.” Campbell (1987, p. 78) goes on to suggest that the pleasure derived from engaging in imagery-based imagination and daydreaming “radically changes [a person’s] view on the place of pleasure in real life,” a bold statement suggesting
many discrepancies may emerge between a consumer’s imaginative mental experience and the actual experience of their desired consumption, consistent with fantasy creation that does not reflect reality, but can be an enjoyable pursuit in and of itself (Oettingen 1999). In fact, it is possible consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences are engaging in what Campbell (1987) refers to as “double desire” and have a “desire for desire,” where both the desire for actualization of the imaginative mental experience and the desire for the experience of the imaginative mental experience itself are sought through the experience of daydreaming and imagination.

2.4.4 Savoring

Another application of the imagination involves savoring. When consumption is known to take place in the future, a sense of anticipation of consumption may arise. Loewenstein (1987) proposes there are potential benefits to delaying actual consumption when anticipating the consumption event involves imagining the actual consumption experience. Further, Loewenstein (1987) suggests delaying actual consumption is also more likely when the imagery experienced during the delay may be more pleasurable to contemplate prior to consumption, especially if the actual consumption act is fleeting. This process of purposeful delaying is referred to as “savoring,” suggesting savoring helps to bridge the gap between short-lived consumption and the pleasures of actual consumption. More recently, savoring is found to support both the upcoming and ongoing consumption experience, as savoring allows consumers to create affective memory traces which are activated and integrated into actual consumption experiences (Chun, Diehl, and MacInnis 2017). These findings support the conceptual suggestion that consumers can engage with the imagination prior to experiencing consumption and that there are potential benefits for consumers through the imaginative experience. For consumers who are not expecting to consume, savoring via imaginative mental experiences may allow consumers to continue to develop their sense of hope for the potential of eventual consumption, no matter how remotely unattainable their consumption desires are.
Engaging in any of these concepts – imagination, fantasy creation, daydreaming, and savoring – allows consumers to explore their desired consumption in order to understand and gain an experience of their desired consumption. Each of these concepts provides insights into the conceptualization and understanding of imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers to create an alternative consumer journey.

2.5 Summary

To explore the focal question of this thesis – do consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences when their desired consumption is deemed to be unattainable – this chapter first examines two key definitions – unattainable consumption and imaginative mental experiences. These key definitions provide a foundation for the literature discussion, which begins with a discussion of the consumption antecedents most relevant to consumer engagement in imaginative mental experiences. Following this, the literature’s understanding of consumption, viewed as an evolutionary review of marketing’s understanding of consumption, consumption experiences and consumer journeys, is described. This section highlights the present-day conceptualization of consumer journeys as the culmination of all touchpoints a consumer experiences through the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages of consumer journeys. Within this discussion, imaginative mental experiences of consumers who desire unattainable consumption items are suggested to act as a touchpoint of the pre-purchase stage of consumer journeys which allow consumers to create alternative consumer journeys. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overview of how the field of marketing currently views the imagination and three related topics that employ imagination: fantasy creation, daydreaming and savoring.

This thesis contributes an integration of many topics from the literature surrounding imagination by specifically examining consumer engagement in imagination when consumers recognize their consumption desires as unattainable. This understanding is viewed through the theoretical development of the consumer journey framework to suggest consumers may create alternative consumer journeys by
engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption desires are unattainable. This research demonstrates consumers integrate pre-purchase stage touchpoints, such as mental imagery, consumption visions, consumption dreaming and wish list creation, within their imaginative experiences to explore their desired future consumption experiences. Building from suggestions by Campbell (1987) that using imagination to construct fantasies may be an end in itself, rather than a step towards actual consumption, this research develops a conceptualization of imaginative mental experiences as a stand-alone way to explore consumption desires via the creation of an alternative consumer journey when consumption is viewed as unattainable. The following chapter develops the conceptual model and predictions of this thesis.
Chapter 3

Initial Conceptual Development

This research is founded on the assumption that consumers who desire unattainable consumption items – that is, items or experiences that, while desirable, are acknowledged to be unpurchaseable in the foreseeable future – may explore their desired consumption items via imaginative mental experiences. In this section, the conceptual understanding of this assumption is illustrated and supported through eight consumer interviews that provide the basis to continue and refine the conceptual development of this research.

3.1 Overview

The development of this thesis is guided by the question of whether consumers explore desired consumption via the imagination when they view their desired consumption items as unattainable. Consumers have long been known to engage in processes and activities that contribute to the development of imagery, fantasy creation and imaginative experiences (Fournier and Guiry 1993; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; MacInnis and Price 1990; Oettingen 1999). While a general understanding of consumption and consumer journeys help frame how consumers recognize desired consumption items as unattainable, concepts related to the imagination help illustrate the ways in which consumers may explore their unattainable consumption desires. At present, the literature does not directly address such a unique consumer situation: how might consumers who are unable to consume engage in consumption employ their imagination?

Recent calls within the literature suggest a greater exploration of topics surrounding imagination is warranted; Pham (2013) believes we do not yet know enough about how consumers interact with desires when they are not actively engaging in the consumption process, and Zaltman (2016) has long been curious to understand imagination as it relates to the discipline of marketing. In a recent theoretical
paper, Jenkins and Molesworth (2017) discuss consumption as something that can occur within the imagination and as a topic worthy of greater attention within marketing theory. Thus, by examining how consumers interact with their unattainable consumption desires, this research aims to contribute to the effort of understanding the imagination as it relates to consumers and their engagement in consumption.

To explore imagination and consumer’s engagement with imagination when consumption desires are deemed unattainable, a more fine-grained examination of relevant topics can help to direct the focus of this research. Many suggestions are made within the literature as to the role of topics such as imagery processing and daydreaming within consumption. In this research, imagery is understood to be the process by which stored images are represented in working memory and can be used at all stages of the consumption process (MacInnis and Price 1987). Previously, MacInnis and Price (1990) explore the effects of imagery processing and consumer experience on consumer expectations and satisfaction, connecting the concept of imagery processing to consumption outcomes. This thesis aims to explore consumption experiences of consumers who engage in activities such as imagery and fantasy creation to support their imaginative exploration of desired yet unattainable consumption items. By exploring these topics, this research aims to broaden our understanding of how consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences which may allow consumers to create a consumption experience that solely exists within the mind. While it is clear consumers may engage in imagination for many different reasons relating to consumption (Jenkins and Molesworth 2017; MacInnis and Price 1987), this research focuses on what is likely a common consumer dilemma – it is impossible for all consumers to consume everything they wish to consume either immediately or within the future and imaginative engagement may be relevant to these consumers. This exploration aims to clarify the outcomes consumers may gain from imaginative mental experiences, specifically when consumption is not expected or planned for in the foreseeable future.

Previously, suggestions that planful or pure daydreaming can provide surrogate experiences that either encourage consumption in the near-term (Fournier and Guiry 1993) or allows for delayed gratification when consumption is blocked for some reason (MacInnis and Price 1987). In their paper on wish list creation, Fourier and Guiry (1993, p. 352) suggest there are a variety of pre-purchase dreaming
activities consumers may engage in, including: wish list creation, anticipatory consumption planning and “fantastical entertainment of consumption possibilities.” Phillips et al. (1995) suggest mental images of future consumption can influence subsequent consumption decision making. Their central suggestion is that “consumption visions” can help consumers evaluate options and enhance decision making. In subsequent work, Phillips (1996, p. 70) identifies consumption visions to be a “vision of the self behaving within an imagined scenario and experiencing the outcomes of those behaviors.” This suggestion, that consumers can actively engage in imagining the future, is a central concern to an understanding of how consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences to explore their consumption desires as they are relevant to their intended or desired future experiences.

Further supporting the notion that consumers may explore unattainable consumption desires via their imagination, d’Astous and Deschenes (2005) suggest consumers often engage in dreams about consumption experiences they wish to have in the future. They suggest these activities are not necessarily different from the study of tangible consumption and agree that for some consumers, dreaming might be the only option when there are constraints on consumption. Many of these authors appear to be talking about a common topic – the engagement of the imagination for the explorative purposes of understanding consumption desires and for the complete immersion in an experience that can be considered consumption in and of itself. Thus, the opportunity exists to both synthesize topics relating to imagery, consumption visions, fantasy creation and daydreaming through a broader understanding of imagination as well as to shed light on a common consumer conundrum – it’s simply not possible to have everything one might want to have. Thus, this research focuses on a specific situation consumers encounter on a regular basis: what do consumers do in situations in which they acknowledge desired consumption to be unattainable?

Returning to the literature, MacInnis and Price (1987) suggest that when actual consumption is not a “viable alternative,” consumers may experience some of the benefits of actual consumption through “imagined consumption.” While this suggestion is not yet subject to empirical testing, the suggestion that there may be benefits for consumers who explicitly recognize consumption is not presently attainable is
central to the primary research question. Further, suggestions that consumers, in anticipation of future consumption, can benefit from delays when the actual utility of consumption is fleeting (e.g., Loewenstein 1987) suggests consumers are well-versed in imagining consumption scenarios of interest, whether or not they are sure they will actually experience their desired consumption in the future. As well, literature in the psychology domain discusses mental contrasting as a way to assist individuals in productively achieving their goals. Findings suggest goal achievement is less likely after fantasizing about the desired future possibilities, potentially due to the experience of the mind gained through the mental contrasting exercise (Oettingen 2014). This research suggests that while achievement of desired consumption is not presently the central goal of consumers, consumers may gain benefits through a consumption experience in the mind due to the immersive nature of the imaginative mental experience.

In the anticipation literature, findings suggest consumers who experience delays and engage in imagining their consumption experiences yet to come experience lower consumption outcomes due to the pain of the wait (Nowlis, Mandel, and McCabe 2004). However, this research’s exploration of imaginative mental experiences differs from this specific consumer situation in that consumers who acknowledge consumption desires as unattainable both are not anticipating receipt of or actual purchase in the future, and are therefore not experiencing a “wait” in the same way that is studied in this area of the literature. Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences of unattainable desires are not striving for a gain in utility via consumption; they desire is a separate experience of the imagination for the unattainable desire which the consumer recognizes as out of reach for the present moment. Thus, the focus of this research is on those consumers who are not expecting to engage in consumption, yet are actively interested in specific desired consumption items.

By focusing specifically on consumers who identify consumption desires that are unattainable, it is possible to examine whether these consumers engage with their imagination to explore their desired consumption experiences via an alternative approach to consumer journeys. While these consumers do not progress through each successive stage of the consumer journey, these consumers may create an alternative consumer journey that, while bound to the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey, offer
an alternative to progressing through all stages and instead involves imaginative engagement which creates emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes.

Therefore, in the initial conceptual development, it is suggested that consumers who view their consumption desires as unattainable do not advance beyond the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016) but may also engage in typical pre-purchase touchpoints to develop what they know about their consumption desires. Focusing specifically on the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey, typical behaviors associated with this stage include need recognition, consideration, and search (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Consumers who desire unattainable consumption experiences likely engage in consideration (they consider that they would like it, but cannot presently attain it) and may or may not engage in search activities. These typical pre-consumption touchpoints are familiar to consumers in their everyday decision making, and likely occur automatically as consumers form a desire for a specific item. Search activities, while typically employed to consider options prior to purchase, may allow consumers who feel their consumption desires are presently unattainable the opportunity to learn about something of interest, explore various configurations and options related to their desire and gain relevant consumption knowledge that may inform tangential consumption decisions.

A consumers’ prior purchase experiences may also influence consumers during the pre-purchase stage. Consumers may have knowledge and experiences relating to an unattainable consumption desire, and this information may affect how consumers interact with various pre-purchase touchpoints, including imaginative mental experiences. While Lemon and Verhoef’s (2016) model assumes consumers proceed from the pre-purchase stage to the purchase stage when ready to make a purchase, this research suggests consumers who perceive desired consumption experiences as unattainable engage in imaginative mental experiences that allow them to create an alternative consumer journey. Thus, consumers may not necessarily proceed to the purchase or post-purchase stages, but rather employ imaginative mental experiences as an enjoyable and engaging way to make the most of their alternative consumer journey.

To initially explore whether consumers explore unattainable consumption desires via imaginative mental experiences, and to provide insights that can help to shape further conceptual development of this
thesis, a series of exploratory consumer interviews with consumers who identified an unattainable desired consumption are conducted. This exploration aims to help shape the extended conceptual framework and subsequent research questions of interest.

3.2 Exploratory Consumer Interview Design and Execution

To explore the initial research question guiding this thesis, and to gain an initial understanding of whether consumers who perceive consumption as unattainable explore their consumption desires through the imagination, a series of eight interviews involving nine participants (one couple participated jointly) were completed. In preparation for these interviews, this research was granted ethics approval through the Queen’s University GREB board (see Appendix A). Upon approval of the research design, interviewing began with participants sourced through personal network connections. To view the recruitment email text employed in contacting and securing interview participants, please see Appendix B.

The exploratory interviews serve to investigate how consumers who feel that desired consumption items are unattainable explore and think about these items. A small number of interviews is deemed sufficient to explore initial evidence of the phenomenon, consistent with previous research studies in this domain (d’Astous and Deschênes 2005; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). Each participant was informed the subject of the conversation would be consumption items or experiences they wish to have but also perceive as unattainable. Interviews covered a broad range of objects and experiences, as each participant determined what was most relevant to themselves. This approach is consistent with prior research exploring general consumption objects consumers intend to consume (Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). Interviews ranged up to one hour in duration. A standard protocol guided conversations but participants directed the interview through their choice of subject matter. Interview participant characteristics can be found in table 1; names have been anonymized. Interview protocol information can be found in Appendix C.
Table 1: Exploratory Consumer Interviews - Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Desired Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sailboat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Wedding Dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell &amp; Ellen</td>
<td>M &amp; F</td>
<td>28 &amp; 20</td>
<td>Home Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Downhill Skis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wingsuit Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Waterfront Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Contemporary Artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Family Trip to Greece</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Completed interviews were transcribed by the author and review of transcriptions involved a thematic analysis (Aronson 1995; Braum and Clarke 2006) that looked for patterns by comparing information both across and within cases and then further classifying data within relevant patterns. Emergent sub-themes were then observed within the main themes uncovered within the data (Aronson 1995). A summary of these themes is found in table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sample Participant Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential antecedents of the imaginative mental experiences</td>
<td>Unattainability - Financial reasons - Family dynamics - Physical limitations</td>
<td>“You need to be young, you need to be fit, you need to have money, and the way that I sort of think to myself, well this would be a great retirement activity, but by then maybe I have the money I have the time, but by that time, I will likely not have the fitness requirements. So, it’s to say that unless a miracle happens, it’s pretty impossible.” - Keith, Wingsuit Flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired/Potential future with desired consumption item</td>
<td></td>
<td>“The freedom of owning your own place, in terms of decorating how you want. Renovations. That kind of thing... we could do laundry whenever we want... if people came over we wouldn’t have to worry about the noise level.” – Russell &amp; Ellen, Home Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-purchase behaviors (list of demonstrated behaviors, as compiled across interviews)</td>
<td>• Online searches (e.g., Google, Wikipedia, Blogs) • Visit websites relevant to item (e.g., retailers, experts) • Mainstream media (e.g., Magazines, TV, Advertisements, Newspaper) • Entertainment sources (e.g., Movies, Books) • Online Media (e.g., YouTube, Hashtag searches on social media, Pinterest, Instagram, online ads) • Event related to desire (e.g., wedding show) • Traditional search activities (e.g., Window shopping) • Prior consumption experiences • Apps (e.g., augmented reality apps for contemporary art)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of desired consumption experience</td>
<td>“I can just picture... the hilltops, and houses built into the hillside... and, um, this is like, so stereotypical, but I picture a little Greek lady, I don’t know, sitting outside her house... that’s probably something that is perpetuated in movies and stuff, but to me... the way I imagine is depicted through that.” – Veronica, Trip to Greece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the imaginative mental experience</td>
<td>Memories, prior imagery as information</td>
<td>“I went to a fancy venue on New Year’s and wore a gown, and that for sure made me think, do I just want this dress in white? .... I was thinking to myself, could I just wear this dress? Like could I be untraditional and wear it? But I’m like, no, I can’t, so I need a different one.” – Ann, Wedding Dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possibilities of consumption use once attained</td>
<td>“I picture jumping off the dock in the summer, picture skating on the lake in the winter” – Kelly, Cottage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations of the imagination / downfalls of overlooking challenges</td>
<td>“Any time you imagine something for that long, then you get to do it, you want it to love up to what you hope it is in your mind” – Veronica, Trip to Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived or desired consequences of engaging in imaginative mental experiences</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>“There is a tinge of negativity around thinking about it because it won’t ever happen, but perhaps there is something similar I can have that will give me the same feelings” – Brian, Artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>“My day to day has come to include this luxury whether or not I attain it – and that’s free” – Brian, Artwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Exploratory Consumer Interview Finding

Review of the interview transcripts via thematic analysis reveal three overarching themes. These themes broadly describe the potential antecedents of the imaginative mental experiences involving their desired consumption, the characteristics of the imaginative mental experiences pertaining to their desired consumption, and the perceived or desired consequences of engaging in imaginative mental experiences about their desired consumption. Each of these themes offers insights to the activities consumers engage in that are consistent with the typical consumer journey framework, but also provide insights as to how consumers cope with their feelings of unattainability. The first theme provides a sense of tensions that consumers feel when evaluating how “possible” consumption of their desires may be in the future as well as how consumers learn about their unattainable consumption desires which may help enhance or inform their imaginative mental experiences. The second theme uncovers how consumers engage with their imagination to explore their desired consumption, and offers a first look at the imaginative mental experiences consumers create. The third theme provides insights to the potential range of outcomes that may arise from engaging in imaginative mental experiences for consumption desires perceived as unattainable.

3.3.1 Potential Antecedents of the Imaginative Mental Experiences

Many potential antecedents that may spur consumers to engage in imaginative mental experiences arose through the exploratory interview findings. First, participants speak directly about their sense of unattainability, frequently describing their desired consumption items as not attainable financially. However, other influencing factors surface as to why consumption is not possible, including family dynamics (e.g., raising children does not all for enough time off to vacation to Greece) or physical limitations (e.g., wingsuit flying requires incredible physical stamina). Generally, participants express a sense of impossibility with respect to their desired consumption item, yet they still find exploring their desired consumption experiences through imaginative mental experiences are an interactive way to
engage with their thoughts and feelings about what they want. One participant who is interested in experiencing wingsuit flying relates the impossibility of his desire to his desire to fantasize:

“I see wingsuit flying as something that [I would do] if I won the lottery tomorrow, and I don’t even buy lottery tickets … I guess that I really do see [wingsuit flying] as strictly a fantasy… I don’t see it as something that I will actually do…. So unless a miracle happens, it’s pretty impossible.” – Keith

Participants also think about their desired consumption item as it relates to the desired or potential future they wish to have as a result of attaining their desired item. While consumers cannot predict the future, they have hopeful expectations that what seems unattainable now may still be possible in the distant future. Consistent with Belk, Ger, and Askegaard’s (2003) suggestion that the process of longing for something ceases to exist when hope fizzles, many participants who talk about what is unattainable and unrealistic also hedge their thoughts of the future by qualifying their hope that their unattainable consumption item becomes attainable in the future. A participant who desires owning waterfront property indicates the longevity of their desire:

“I may never buy a property on the water, but I still really want to. It is still on my bucket list. And it’s always going to be there, probably.” – Kelly

Other participants explain behaviors they engage in that help them understand their desired consumption items and the experience they wish to have with that item. Individuals appear to engage in behaviors consistent with known consumption touchpoints that relate to learning about and exploring potential consumption desires. Participants mention internet-based research, talking to friends and family members, browsing websites, stores, and magazines as helpful tools that aid their understanding of the consumption items they wish to attain but perceive to be unattainable. This is consistent with the literature’s understanding of consumer engagement in other pre-purchase stage touchpoints as a means of preparing for the consumption stage of the consumer journey. However, while consumers seek information relating to their consumption desires, consistent with the pre-purchase stage of the consumer
journey, it is unclear if the information they seek is the same that would be sought if they were certain they would be progressing to the consumption stage of the consumer journey at this time.

One clear pattern in the responses of participants suggest that, while they imagine the things they want to have, they may not have all of the relevant information required to fully understand what they want. This also appears to be a limitation that, as well as the feeling of unattainability, does not allow the consumer to proceed from pre-purchase to purchase, but may allow them to engage in imaginative mental experiences to explore their desires. Additionally, participants suggest there is a clear distinction in the information they seek relating to their desires, such that they may seek information that supports their desire but may also focus on the fantasy without researching more concrete information due to their perceptions of unattainability. This may both limit their information gathering or direct their information gathering in a specific way due to unattainability. For Keith, who is interested in wingsuit flying, there is an acknowledged gap between imagination and the potential reality:

“I’m not well informed on this. I have the good, but not the bad… I feel like my knowledge is somewhat lacking. I fill in the blanks with this rosy imagination of how things could be in a perfect world. I think honestly, yeah, there is a lot that I could do out there as far as basic Internet research, but just the fact that I see it as such an unlikely occurrence, just doing the cost/benefit analysis, it’s not something that would be worth the expenditure of time to put into the research.” – Keith

### 3.3.2 Characteristics of the Imaginative Mental Experiences

Participants who engage in imaginative mental experiences appear to draw on imagery recalled from memory and elaborate on their imagery to form an imaginative scenario of interest. Features and benefits of the desired consumption item as the participant views them feature prominently in the imagined scenario. One participant who wishes to travel to a specific European destination with their family draws on stored imagery:

“[This trip] is so desirable to me. Everything is so fresh and bright and beautiful. The weather is so obviously appealing. Food. Just, yeah. The whole aesthetic. I picture those little, like, blue and white roofs in my mind and those crystal waters. I want to be there!” – Veronica
Other participants, also explore experiencing the desired item through the imaginative mental experience.

“I really like to imagine – fantasize is probably the right word – I’m there… I imagine that I’m the guy doing the wingsuit flying. I’m going through the process. The terrain, what the treetops might look like below.” – Keith

“I would like an open concept [design]. To me, “grand” means open concept. You can congregate in this open space where you can have guests over and be cooking and have them sit on the couch comfortably. To me, that would be very grand. To have tile and hardwood flooring… Custom lighting would be really good.” – Kelly

In examining the responses, it is clear participants vividly imagine what acquiring their desired consumption item would allow them to do, to attain, or to accomplish. For Kelly, the imaginative mental experience involves picturing the activities that could be done as a result of attaining the waterfront property:

“I’m picturing middle of the night, going skating with the lights down on the water, and you shoveled the heck out of it during the day, and you bring your hot chocolate down and you have a couple chairs down there and you have your lights attached to an extension cord, and they are hanging down a tree towards the water. And you have a very big rink. It’s a monstrosity. It’s probably bigger than anyone else’s. It’s probably the biggest rink on the lake, and it maybe isn’t just a rink, it goes beyond the rink and has little paths going around, and I picture that a lot… I picture going around in a snowmobile on the lake. And stopping into visit with the neighbors. I picture in the summer, jumping off the dock into the deep water. And I love the view from the kitchen window down to the water.” – Kelly

However, participants also acknowledge the potential limitations of their imagination as they suggest what they picture may not clearly represent reality. Although participants overlook some of the more realistic details of their consumption desires, they also recognize the potential downfall to overlooking potential obstacles or challenges relating to what they want. This suggests an understanding that there are often differences between the imagination and the potential real experience:
“Anytime you imagine something for that long you want to make sure that you are going to get to do and it’s going to live up to what you are hoping it is in your mind… I think there is like, a little bit of pressure to make sure… it lives up to what you are hoping it to be.” – Veronica

“Yeah, it’s enjoyable but it’s also painful at the same time. Um, to me, like, on average, things don’t measure up to the way they are in my head for the most part… So yeah, I think about it a lot more than I probably should, but it doesn’t make any sense to [think about it], as it ain’t going to happen.” – Keith

3.3.3 Perceived or Desired Consequences of Engaging in Imaginative Mental Experiences

A third theme emerging from the responses is that participants have a clear sense of the consequences of engaging in imaginative mental experiences. Although participants suggest it does not entirely make sense to think a lot about what is unattainable, they appear to enjoy the imaginative mental experience they create in doing so. For participants, the imaginative mental experience offers both a “mental vacation” and recharges their hope for the possibility of future consumption, motivating continued interest in the consumption item they acknowledge is unattainable. As well, participants speak of the ability for their desired consumption to help enhance who they are, and that others may recognize this if they were to consume. This suggests there are potential positive outcomes for consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences, that the mental stimulation provided by engaging in imaginative mental experiences is a rewarding experience, even though consumers are still within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey.

3.3.4 General Findings

This initial exploration of the ways consumers employ their imagination to explore desired consumption suggests consumers do engage in imaginative mental experiences involving consumption experiences they presently perceive to be unattainable. The consumption items consumers focus on typically represent who they wish to become in the future or what they wish to express to others, pointing to a relationship between self-concept perceptions and imaginative mental experience engagement, consistent with prior literature connecting consumption with self-concept development (Grubb and
Grathwohl 1967; Ross 1971). For these consumers, imaginative mental experiences offer the opportunity to explore the specific details as well as the desired lifestyle and self-concept outcomes they wish to experience as a result of consumption. As well, it appears that the clearer the image a consumer has of what they wish to experience, the more vivid an examination they may create through imaginative mental experiences of what they hope to attain or experience in the future, regardless of whether consumption might be possible. Imaginative mental experiences also appear to offer some positive outcomes, a suggestion that is more fully explored in subsequent research method applications.

3.4 Summary

Overall, these exploratory consumer interview findings suggest consumers do, in fact, engage with imagination relating to unattainable consumption desires, supporting the initial conceptual development of this dissertation. This initial examination of imaginative mental experiences offers a foundation for further exploration of the relationships among how consumers focus on consumption items that may enhance their self-concept perceptions or perceptions others have of them, vividness of imagery and the connection of imaginative mental experiences as a means to explore desired consumption experiences. Further, the actual experiences of the imaginative mental experiences require greater exploration to better understand the consumer’s experience of the imagination. Finally, what outcomes consumers gain from the imaginative exploration may allow for potential marketing applications related to consumer’s interaction with the imagination. Based on these findings, the next chapter refines and extends the conceptual framework and presents relevant propositions and hypotheses.
Chapter 4

Extended Conceptual Framework and Predictions

Three research questions arise from the initial conceptual development and the analysis of the exploratory consumer interviews. This chapter explores the extended conceptual framework surrounding these questions and presents several propositions and hypotheses along with a conceptual model diagram. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary and expectations of the methodological findings.

4.1 Overview

The findings of the exploratory interviews suggest consumers do engage with imagination when they recognize unattainable consumption desires. While the interviews offer a sense of what consumers do to engage with imagination and the inputs consumers may draw upon to inform the imagination, there is an opportunity to deepen this understanding, both in terms of what influences consumers to engage in imaginative mental experiences, and to gain a richer understanding of the experiences consumers create through their own imaginative mental experiences. The exploratory interviews also suggest consumers gain some benefits and outcomes from their imaginative mental experience engagement; a suggestion explored further through the extended consumption development.

Building on the insights developed through the exploratory interviews, this research now focuses on three research questions: first, when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? Second, when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? Third, what outcomes do consumers gain from creating alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable? In this section, several propositions suggesting imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers to create an alternative consumer journey are developed. Following this is an outline of several hypotheses that guide the methodological development of this research.
In the hypotheses development section, several relationships are examined. First, that perceptions of unattainability, vividness of currently stored mental images, and perceptions that their desired consumption items will enhance their self-concept influence a consumers’ engagement in imaginative mental experiences. Then, the relationship between consumers increasing their understanding of desired consumption experiences through imaginative mental experiences is explored as well as the ability to understand whether their imaginative mental experience represent potential realities or not. Finally, the relationship between imaginative mental experience engagement increasing both consumers’ emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes is proposed. Specifically, the focus on emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes represent an initial assessment of the feelings, experiences and benefits that imaginative mental experiences offer consumers, even though they are not engaging in consumption at this time.

4.2 Proposition Development

Consumption is understood to be composed of three main stages which allow consumers to prepare for consumption (pre-consumption) engage in the experience of transacting (consumption) and reflect on the experiences (post-consumption) (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Many of the topics surrounding imagery processing and imagination are generally captured within consumption as activities that allow consumers to prepare for consumption experiences, and thus belong to the pre-consumption stage of the consumer journey. This dissertation research demonstrates consumers can engage in imaginative mental experiences that, while absent of actual consumption transactions, may allow consumers who view desired consumption as unattainable to create alternative consumer journeys.

Consumers constantly juggle their own desires against their needs and abilities to satisfy those needs through consumption. For consumers who have many different desires, it is not possible to engage with all desires simultaneously. Thus, there are likely some desires consumers are hopeful for, yet consumers also understand how likely (or unlikely) they will be able to act on these desires. Fournier and Guiry (1993) articulate this well in their description of wish list creation as a societal activity that allows
consumers the ability to frame up potential desires they are hopeful to experience in the future. Stemming from this, the exploratory interviews provide evidence that consumers can easily identify their most salient desires that are both highly desirable but are also items or experiences they cannot presently consume.

While the reasons consumption desires are unattainable at any given time is specific to the individual, consumers very clearly understand what desires are attainable and what desires are unattainable in their own lives at any given time. Although many consumption items may be desirable to consumers, it is not to say that all consumption desires would necessarily be the subject of imaginative mental experiences; MacInnis and Price (1987) suggest that consumption items which involve risks via consumption and are sensory in nature (e.g., skydiving) are more likely to provide consumers benefits when engaging in imagery processing. Phillips et al. (1995) suggest that items which allow consumers to conceptualize possible selves and contribute to goal formation are more relevant to visioning exercises. Building on Phillips et al. (1995) and MacInnis and Price (1987), in this research, the consumption items consumers recognize as unattainable – for whatever reason – and which become the subject of imaginative mental experiences are likely those that are viewed by the consumer to be self-expressive. Consistent with prior literature that suggests consumers actively puruse self-concept development (Birdwell 1968; Goffman 1978; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967), consumers tend to focus on consumption items that may contribute to the formation or development of the self as well as to their understanding of their future desired life experience. In this research, the term self-expressive is applied to represent something consumers view is expressive of who they are or who they are striving to become via consumption. Thus, imaginative mental experiences involve immersive explorations of the experiences consumers wish to have when they attain their unattainable, self-expressive consumption items.

**P1:** When consumers identify self-expressive consumption desires that are highly salient yet unattainable, consumers are more likely to engage in imaginative mental experiences.

When consumers desire self-expressive items or experiences that are unattainable yet enjoyable to think about, it is suggested that consumers may thereby choose to engage in imagining various situations
involving the experiences they are hopeful to experience relating to the item they desire. Consumers may imagine situations of use, how they would incorporate the item into their daily life, or how this item enhances, changes or affects their life, as well as how others may perceive this item as part of their life. Thus, the imaginative mental experiences may focus on various desired situations of use, or perhaps the purpose or fit within a consumer’s desired life situation. These experiences may also extrapolate to situations consumers wish to occur, whether they manifest in real life or not. In developing an imaginative mental experience, consumers may access relevant knowledge and experience they have stored in memory and developed throughout pre-purchase touchpoint engagement. For some consumers, these elements will influence and guide their imaginative experiences. For others, the imaginative experience may simply involve placing themselves within an imagined consumption scenario involving their desired consumption item in a conceptualization borne primarily of the imagination.

Consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences due to their general sense of desire for the item coupled with specific feelings of unattainability. However, their experience within the imaginative mental experience are likely influenced by the specific reasons they desire the item. For example, many individuals desire sports cars, but the reasons why the sport car is desirable will differ from individual to individual – one person may want a sports car for the beauty of the design of the car, while another person may desire the horsepower, speed, and performance of the car. Thus, these differences likely influence the focal elements of an individual consumer’s imaginative mental experience. Consumers use their imaginative experiences to explore various situations of use or experiences with the desired consumption item as well as the experiences of specific outcomes related to their attainment of the consumption item. Often, these outcomes are reflective of the ways consumption is viewed to potentially improve or enhance the self (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Landon Jr 1974; Ross 1971).

As imaginative mental experiences are highly personal, consumers may be prompted to engage in imaginative mental experiences through many different sources. For example, viewing advertisements, seeing others with or using their desired item, experiencing less favorable alternatives, engaging in typical pre-consumption touchpoints (e.g., window shopping, conducting product research), as well as by simply
choosing to think about the potential experience with a desired item, may all prompt imaginative mental experiences. As well, imaginative mental experience experiences do not need to be long, but can be short, or even momentary. Thus, many different types of cues, both internal and external, may prompt an imaginative mental experiences to occur; and when they do occur, they are very personal in nature.

P2: Engagement in imaginative mental experiences is prompted by both internal and external cues; imaginative mental experiences offer a personalized experience of the imagination as it relates to their own personal aspirations for consumption.

Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences as a personalized exploration of their desired consumption likely experience increases in specific emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, even though they are not engaging with anything more than their imagination. Prior literature suggests consumers gain positive outcomes through savoring both anticipated yet fleeting consumption events and upcoming consumption experiences (Chun, Diehl, and MacInnis 2017; Loewenstein 1987). While untested, Campbell (1987) asserts that the pleasure derived from imagination and daydreaming can act as a state of enjoyable discomfort. Literature in the psychology area also supports the suggestion that fantasy activities may offer consumers enjoyment in the here and now, even if the fantasy does not represent or connect to reality (Leonard 2005; Oettingen and Mayer 2002). Thus, consumers may encounter feelings of enjoyment of and satisfaction with the experience of the imagination or increased awareness of their desire for the item. It is also possible that negative emotions arise for consumers, as the imaginative mental experience may remind consumers of their unattainability. If the imaginative mental experience for an item is recurring – in that consumers engage in the imaginative mental experience on a repetitive basis – consumers may also benefit from the compounding effect of engaging with the imagination, reaping increases in the overall clarity and specificity of their desires, or perhaps changing expectations as to their desired experience in the future. Therefore, imaginative mental experiences offer increased emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes to consumers in that, the imaginative mental experience offers consumers an alternative consumer journey, where consumers employ their imagination to explore their desired consumption experiences in their own mind’s eye.
P3: Engaging in imaginative mental experiences offer increases in emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes to consumers and represent an alternative consumption experience that does not involve progression through all three stages of the consumer journey.

When engaging in imaginative mental experiences, consumers draw on their own existing knowledge and stored imagery to support and inform their imaginative mental experiences. For some consumers, the integration of prior consumption experiences, consumption knowledge and relevant information within the imaginative mental experience is very relevant, while for others, the imaginative experience is simply an imaginative exploration of the possible scenarios they wish to experience. Thus, while the level of information a consumer has relative to their desires does not limit their ability to engage in imaginative mental experiences, the vividness and depth of the experience may vary across consumers, based on the information they employ in their imaginative mental experience. Existing information – in whatever form consumers have stored it – act as presumptions consumers have about their own desired consumption experiences. Presumptions generally embody how consumers view their desired consumption experiences may occur in reality. These presumptions may develop over time, as information is gathered. Presumptions are likely to develop, change or strengthen over time and inform imaginative mental experience creation. As well, presumptions likely arise as a result of engaging in the imaginative mental experience, and can impact how consumers recall or remember the imaginative mental experience. However, the stronger a consumer’s own presumptions about their desired consumption experience, the more influence they hold over a consumer’s expectations of actual consumption in the future.

P4: Presumptions consumers create relating to desired consumption experiences are employed during imaginative mental experiences and influence a consumer’s expectations of actual consumption experiences in the future. Presumptions may also arise as a result of engaging in the imaginative mental experience.

Coupled with information gathered through engaging in pre-purchase stage activities such as search and consideration (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), consumers who engage in imaginative mental
experiences as part of their alternative consumer journey when consumption desires are perceived as unattainable are able to gain a greater understanding of their consumption desires. An increased understanding of their desired consumption may encourage consumers to re-engage in the imaginative mental experience over time. The imaginative mental experience is able to act as a continual source of emotional outcomes, offering improvements and refinements on their perceptions of the possibilities of their own consumption through the exploration of the imagination. Thus, as consumers continually or repetitively engage in imaginative mental experiences for a desired consumption experience, their imaginative mental experience experiences are likely to evolve and change to capture new avenues of imaginative exploration.

**P5:** When consumers gain an increased understanding of their desired consumption through engaging in imaginative mental experiences, consumers are likely to engage in recurring imaginative mental experiences that evolve and change as consumers explore new avenues of imaginative exploration.

It is also possible the imaginative mental experience allows consumers to overlook true aspects of consumption through a selective frame of the imagination focusing on selective aspects, for example, only what is perceived as the “fun” aspects of the experience. One who wants to ride a rollercoaster may think primarily of the rush of excitement present in the fast movement of the coaster, but is likely to neglect thinking about the possibility of feeling ill due to motion sickness after the experience. The imagination, by default, allows the consumer to direct their attention to specific aspects of consumption while selectively ignoring other aspects of consumption. Thus, consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences may create an “experience” that does not resemble the true reality of consumption or the potential consequences of consumption. Consumers can also recognize the downsides of consumption, even if they are not focused on within the imaginative mental experience and this may temper their experiences with the imaginative mental experience.

**P6:** Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences are likely to create experiences that do not accurately reflect reality.
A visual summary of the proposed extended conceptual framework is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Conceptual Understanding of Imaginative Mental Experience Generation

4.3 Hypothesis Development

Drawing from the suggested propositions, the hypotheses development explores specific relationships which will be examined via a multi-methodological approach in this thesis. Beginning with the first research question emerging from the exploratory interviews, this research explores the relationship between of consumers’ perception of desired consumption as unattainable and increases in the vividness of existing mental images consumers have regarding their desired consumption items, which subsequently increases engagement in imaginative mental experiences. As well, the conceptual development suggests a relationship between self-concept development concerns of the consumer and their engagement with imaginative mental experiences, likely mediated by the vividness of existing mental images consumer have regarding their desired consumption items.

Concentrating on the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey, consumer engagement in various pre-purchase touchpoints (Fournier and Guiry 1993; MacInnis and Price 1987, 1990; Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995), while not essential to the engagement in imaginative
mental experiences, support the knowledge and experience consumers may draw upon in their
development of imaginative mental experiences. Referring to the insights derived from the exploratory
interviews, imaginative mental experiences are likely enhanced by the vividness of the imagery they
employ within the imaginative mental experience as many interviewees spoke of the “vividness” of their
imagined experiences. Consistent with this suggestion are prior research findings of vividness enhancing
judgments and persuasion (Block and Keller 1997; McGill and Anand 1989b). When consumers perceive
desired consumption items as unattainable, consumers experience increases in the vividness in their
existing imagery, and this in turn enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences. Thus,

\[\text{H1: When consumers perceive consumption items as unattainable, they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.}\]

Another observation developed through the exploratory interviews pertains to how interviewees
describe their unattainable consumption items in terms of the relationship these items have with who they
are or who they wish to become. Generally, there is a broad association between consumption and self-
concept as a means of expressing identity (Belk 1988; Epp and Price 2008; Schau 2000), and
consumption serving as a way to augment perceptions of actual self-concept. Similarly, desired
consumption items may represent a projection of the ideal self-concept (Birdwell 1968; Grubb and
Grathwohl 1967; Landon Jr 1974; Ross 1971). Many of the participants in the exploratory interviews
speak directly to the ways in which they view their self-concept changing or augmenting in the future if
they are to attain their desired consumption experiences. Thus, it appears the desire for an unattainable
consumption item is not mutually exclusive from the desire to augment the self-concept via consumption
items that are unattainable. When consumers perceive unattainable consumption items as a way to
enhance their self-concept, they also increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, linking
the desired consumption experience to their desire to augment their own self-concept, even though the
item is unattainable. As consumers focus on their desired consumption item, they may also experience
increases in the vividness in their existing imagery, and this in turn enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences. Thus,

\[ H2: \quad \text{When consumers perceive consumption items a way to enhance their self-concept they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.} \]

Each of these two hypotheses focus on addressing the first research question, which asks: when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? While there are many potential factors, H1 and H2 focus on exploring the connections between perceptions of the self-concept and the strength of existing imagery in allowing consumers to engage in imaginative mental experiences. Exploration of these two hypotheses aims to provide support for this research’s suggestion that consumers who desire unattainable consumption items engage in imaginative mental experiences.

To explore the second research question emerging from the exploratory interviews, it is essential to examine the actual experiences consumers gain from engaging in imaginative mental experiences. Building from the findings of the exploratory interviews, it appears that imaginative mental experiences focus on what consumers expect to experience with consumption in the future. This is likely to be a highly personalized experience that incorporates prior knowledge, desired expectations and outcomes of consumption, and may reflect their own understanding of what consumption might entail if they were to experience actually consuming their desired item in the future. For consumers who use the imaginative mental experience to explore potential desired futures involving their consumption desires, it is expected that as consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences they increase their overall understanding – in the form of clarity – of their desired future consumption experiences. Thus,

\[ H3: \quad \text{When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase how clear their desired future consumption experiences are in their mind’s eye.} \]
While engaging in imaginative mental experiences allows consumers to more clearly understand what they would like their future desired consumption experiences to be like, consumers also gain increases in their ability to distinguish whether their imagination in fact represents a potential reality or not. While the imagination can be driven by fantasy, consumers who strive to gain consumption items understand that aspects of reality must be present if they are to understand what may be possible in the future. This is important because consumers can choose whether their imagination is reflective of what may be possible in the future or not. Thus, consumers’ ability to distinguish this increases with greater imaginative mental experience engagement.

**H4:** *When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities.*

The third and fourth hypotheses offer the opportunity to examine the second research question, which asks: when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? As consumers can engage in an imaginative mental experience that is highly personalized, it is expected that as engagement in the imaginative mental experience increases, consumers increase their clarity as to the desired consumption situation they wish to experience in the future. As well, as engagement in imaginative mental experiences increases, consumers develop their ability to distinguish whether what they wish to obtain in the future is reflective of reality or not. It is possible that for one consumer, the imaginative mental experience is highly reflective of what they wish to obtain, but at the same time, they recognize that what they wish to have occur through consumption may not at all reflect the actual reality of consumption. In any case, the imagination offers many explorative possibilities, and studying the experiences consumers create will help shed light on H3 and H4.

To examine the third research question emerging from the exploratory interviews, it is important to focus on the outcomes arising for consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences involving unattainable consumption items. Imaginative mental experiences may offer positive outcomes to
consumers, even though they are not proceeding to the purchase or post-purchase stages of the consumer journey and are instead creating an alternative consumer journey within the imagination. Evidence from the exploratory interviews suggests consumers find “moments of joy” and feelings of excitement as well as potential disappointment. Being that imaginative mental experiences are sensory in nature to begin with, both experiential-based outcomes (e.g., excitement of the experience, enjoyment of the experience) and emotion-based outcomes (e.g., positive valence, negative valence) are of interest here. This section proceeds with three hypotheses examining specific constraints under which the experiential-based outcomes and emotion-based outcomes of the imaginative mental experience may differ.

First, consumers who engage in imagination when their desired consumption is unattainable may have varying perceptions on the true possibility of their consumption desires becoming a reality. For those consumers who understand consumption to be a slim-to-none chance, their engagement in the imagination may be simply for the enjoyment of the imagination of something they feel is truly inaccessible. However, for other consumers, their sense of unattainability may be limited in that they cannot have what they desire now, but that they have a greater sense that consumption may occur in the future. Whether or not these impressions are accurate, the question is: how do these impressions of their chances of consumption affect the outcomes gained through imaginative mental experiences? It is possible the outcomes of imaginative mental experience experiences are greater for those consumers who objectively state they understand consumption is not going to occur soon, or perhaps at all, as they are then limited to only experiencing an alternative consumer journey, but that perceived limitation offers them limitless exploration of their imagination.

Thus, the perceived chances that the consumer will attain their desired consumption in the future are likely to enhance the outcomes consumers gain through imaginative mental experiences. This is consistent with MacInnis and Price’s (1987) suggestion that consumption situations that are both high cost (which in this context may equate to unattainability) and involve high sensory involvement will have the greatest benefits to consumers when they are not engaging in consumption. Depending on whether
actual consumption is viewed as possible or not, the outcomes of the imaginative mental experiences are likely to differ accordingly. Thus,

\textit{H5A}: As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.

\textit{H5B}: As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.

Second, the degree to which the desired consumption item is perceived to be self-expressive to the consumer may enhance the outcomes consumers gain through imaginative mental experiences. Consistent with findings from the exploratory interviews that consumers focus on items that may represent or enhance the self, it is possible that when imaginative mental experiences are concentrated on consumption items viewed to be self-expressive of the individual, the outcomes of imaginative mental experiences are stronger. Thus,

\textit{H6A}: As a consumer’s desire increases in self-expressiveness, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.

\textit{H6B}: As a consumer’s desire increases in self-expressiveness, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.

Third, the presumptions consumers embed within their imaginative mental experiences and which develop through their imaginative mental experiences may affect the strength of the outcomes gained from their imaginative mental experiences. The exploratory interviews suggest consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences may, upon reflecting on their imaginative mental experience, recognize that what they presume to be possible in their imagination may or may not actually reflect reality. While imaginative mental experiences likely contain a mix of inaccurate and accurate presumptions, as viewed by the consumer, when either the inaccurate or accurate nature of the presumptions are made salient to the consumer, this may affect the strength of the outcomes consumers gain through the imaginative mental
experience. How accurate their presumptions are may be reflected in situations consumers commonly encounter – such as learning about a friend’s actual consumption experience and realizing their earlier presumptions do not match their friend’s experience, or watching an advertisement for a desired consumption item and reaffirming their presumption due to the depiction of the marketing efforts. Thus,

**H7A:** *As a consumer’s presumptions increase in perceived accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.*

**H7B:** *As a consumer’s presumptions increase in perceived accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.*

**H7C:** *As a consumer’s presumptions increase in perceived accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in the strength of beliefs and feelings towards their presumptions.*

Hypotheses 5A-7B addresses the third research question arising from the exploratory interviews: what outcomes do consumers gain from engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable? Two specific outcomes are studied through these hypotheses, owing to the sensory and intangible nature of imaginative mental experiences: emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes. By examining three specific constraints under which the outcomes of imaginative mental experiences may differ for consumers, it may be possible to provide evidence for the third research question. A summary of hypotheses is presented in table 3 and a visual depiction of the testable relationships of this thesis is found in Figure 3.
Table 3: Summary of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1</strong></td>
<td>When consumers perceive consumption items as unattainable, they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H2</strong></td>
<td>When consumers perceive consumption items a way to enhance their self-concept they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3</strong></td>
<td>When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase how clear their desired future consumption experiences are in their mind’s eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H4</strong></td>
<td>When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5A</strong></td>
<td>As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5B</strong></td>
<td>As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7C</strong></td>
<td>As a consumer’s presumptions increase in perceived accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in the strength of beliefs and feelings towards their presumptions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Summary of Testable Relationships

Perceptions of Self-Concept Enhancement

Perceptions of Unattainability

Vividness of Existing Imagery

Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement

Understanding of Consumption & Potential Realities

Emotion-Based Outcomes

Experiential-Based Outcomes

Perceived Chances of Consumption

Self-Expressiveness of Consumption Item

Presumptions of Actual Consumption Experiences
4.4 Summary and Expectations

Imaginative mental experiences are not presently recognized as a touchpoint of the consumer journey, however, when consumers perceive consumption items as unattainable, this research suggests consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences in order to gain an experience of their desired consumption items within the mind. Imaginative mental experiences are suggested as the pre-purchase touchpoint most relevant to consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable and that consumers may engage in imaginative mental experiences as a way to create an alternative consumer journey when consumption desires are viewed as unattainable. These imaginative mental experiences offer consumers an immersive, story-based narrative involving desired consumption constructed from existing knowledge and experience, as well as mental imagery and elaboration of these images based on the desired future outcome the consumer wishes to achieve.

This section builds on the initial conceptual development and empirical support for the initial conceptual development through eight exploratory consumer interviews, by developing an extended conceptual framework. Within the extended conceptual framework, three emergent research questions guide the extended conceptual framework. First, when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? Second, when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of the consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? Third, what outcomes do consumers gain from creating alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable?

To examine these questions, seven hypotheses are presented. Hypotheses 1 and 2 address the first research question, and aim to explore the connections between perceptions of both unattainability and self-concept development, vividness of existing mental images, and engagement in imaginative mental experiences. Hypotheses 3 and 4 explore the second research question, and aim to understand the experiences consumers create through their own imaginative mental experiences by examining whether
consumers’ imaginative mental experiences both increase the clarity consumers have regarding the desired future consumption experience they wish to have, and allow consumers to distinguish whether their imaginative mental experiences represent potential realities. Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 explore three specific constraints under which the outcomes – emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes – of imaginative mental experiences may differ, providing support for the third and final research question.

To examine the hypotheses which represent the extended conceptual framework, and to strengthen the findings of exploratory interviews, three studies are developed. In the following chapter, the design, execution and results of a consumption survey, critical incident technique interviews and experimental designs are discussed.
Chapter 5

Research Rationale and Study Overviews

The purpose of this thesis is threefold – first, to understand the relationship between consumer perceptions of unattainable consumption desires and engaging in imaginative mental experiences; second, to understand the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences; and third, to understand the value consumers gain from creating alternative consumer journeys by engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption desires are deemed unattainable. To achieve these objectives, a multi-method approach is employed, comprising three research studies. Each of the selected methods applied through these studies provides the opportunity to gather data that allows, through appropriate analysis techniques, a greater understanding of the antecedents, experiences, and outcomes of engaging in imaginative mental experiences when desired consumption is unattainable. In this chapter, the rationale for selecting a multi-method approach is described, as well as a detailed description of the purpose, design and analysis procedures applied to each of the three studies comprising the thesis. As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, ethics approval was sought through the Queen’s University GREB board to conduct these studies (see Appendix A). Relevant amendments were submitted during the data collection period as data from Study 1 informed the development of Study 2, and data from Study 1 and Study 2 informed the development of Study 3.

Employing a multi-method research design offers many outcomes that are otherwise not possible if only one methodological perspective is adopted. First, the theory drives the methodological choices to avoid constraining the research to a specific, predetermined methodological approach. Second, by employing various methods, approaching imaginative mental experiences from various angles contributes to triangulation through the comparison of information gathered across various methods (Creswell 2014; Myers 2009). Third, employing a variety of methods strengthens the overall ability to generalize findings due to the possibility of consistent findings across varying methods (Creswell 2015). Finally, the research
studies in this research were developed through an iterative approach, incorporating insights from the previous study in the next study design. This chapter proceeds with a brief overview of each completed study, followed by detailed descriptions of the design and execution of each study. Chapter 6 discusses the results and findings of each study.

5.1 Study 1 Overview

The first study aim to address the first research question: when consumers identify unattainable consumption desires, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? To do this, an empirical study employing both open-ended and close-ended questions gathers information about consumer’s unattainable desires is conducted. The use of a survey presents a way to build upon the exploratory interviews completed during the conceptual development phase of the research and as way to gather a broad range of insights that can contribute to more fine-grained approaches in subsequent studies. Thus, a survey method is chosen as it allows a programmatic way to examine individual cases across scale-based questions as well as qualitative insights that can inform a range of specific questions pertaining to the individuals’ experience dealing with unattainability. The specific experience of engaging in imaginative mental experiences is not subject to examination in this study, as the focus here is on understanding how consumers deal with their unattainable desires and what activities they engage in when thinking about their unattainable desires.

Within the survey, specific questions address related pre-purchase touchpoints identified through the literature review as potentially relevant to consumer’s development of knowledge and experience incorporated within in imaginative mental experiences when consumption desires are unattainable. The data gathered in this study demonstrates consumers who find their consumption desires to be unattainable gain increases in the vividness of their mental images, which enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences (H1). Additionally, this study also demonstrates consumers whose identify unattainable consumption desires which may enhance their self-concept perceptions gain increases in the vividness of their mental images, which enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences (H2).
Study 1 also examines participants’ open-ended responses through a content analysis procedure to identify relevant themes and sub-themes. This study demonstrates consumers who find their consumption desires to be unattainable generally are not just limited by financial constraints. Consumers find that “why” something is unattainable comprises many influences that may contribute to financial constraints, including family dynamics and perceptions of their current life stage. This study also provides initial evidence that imaginative mental experiences offer beneficial outcomes to consumers in the form of positive feelings.

In summary, Study 1 aims to present evidence for the connection between recognitions of unattainable desires and engaging in imaginative mental experiences to provide the basis for the interview protocol development that is employed in Study 2 to explore the experiences of imaginative mental experiences.

5.2 Study 2 Overview

The second study aims to address the question: what are the experiences of consumers who engage in these alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences to explore unattainable consumption desires? To do this, a series of qualitative critical incident technique (CIT) interviews were conducted. The critical incident technique is first introduced by Flanagan (1954) to study human behaviors in order to assist in solving practical problems (Flanagan 1954), however the technique has evolved to apply to both psychological states and experiences (Borgen, Amundson, and Butterfield 2008; Butterfield et al. 2005). This method is subsequently applied in various marketing and consumer studies (Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994; Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Derbaix and Vanhamme 2003; Gremler 2004; Grove and Fisk 1997; Keaveney 1995; Meuter et al. 2000). Qualitative interviewing via the CIT is applied here as it allows for systematic collection of participants own self-reported experiences with imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption desires. This methodological approach allows for a more robust and in-depth understanding of consumers and their imaginative mental
experiences involving unattainable consumption desires so a general understanding of the experiences consumers attain through imaginative mental experiences may be attained.

The data gathered in this study provides support for the suggestion that as consumers increase their engagement with imaginative mental experiences, they gain increases in the clarify of their desired future consumption experiences (H3). Additionally, this study also provides support for the suggestion that as consumers increase their engagement with imaginative mental experiences they increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities or not (H4). This study also suggests what “unattainable” means to consumers varies across a spectrum, from “it’s never ever gonna happen” to “it’s absolutely going to happen, just not right now.” Additional findings of Study 2 provide evidence that: desired consumption items are typically self-expressive in nature; knowledge levels play a role in shaping the imaginative mental experience; and, imaginative mental experiences allow consumers the ability to explore various experiences they wish to have as a result of attaining their consumption desires. Finally, this study’s findings suggest there are benefits and increases in both emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes for consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences, even though they are not engaging in consumption at this time.

In this study, the CIT method is an appropriate choice as participants are asked to report from memories about past imaginative mental experiences. Participants who are asked to recall imaginative mental experiences they engage in when they perceive consumption desires as unattainable are likely to find that the experiences are highly memorable as they relate to a significant consumption object of interest. Additionally, the format of the CIT allows for a specific focus (i.e., imaginative mental experiences), yet it is flexible in allowing the participant to recall a consumption desire that is most relevant to them (i.e., personally relevant object or experience that is also unattainable), and thus does not constrain participants to a particular product or consumption context. Consistency across participants is maintained through the interview question protocol and enables consistent examination of the antecedents of the incident, the experience of the incident and the outcomes of the incident (Butterfield et al. 2005) as
perceived by consumers. Collected interview data is analyzed via a scientifically rigorous content analysis procedure in accordance with the CIT methodological approach. In summary, Study 2 aims to present evidence for the experiences of imaginative mental experiences as a way for consumers to create alternative consumer journeys and provide new theoretical insights relevant to the development and execution of Study 3.

5.3 Study 3 Overview

The third study aims to address the question: what outcomes do consumers gain from engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable? In examining this research question, two specific types of outcomes become the focus of Study 3: emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes. These specific outcomes are important, as imaginative mental experiences are sensory in nature, and understanding the effects of imaginative mental experience generation on consumer’s thoughts and feelings as well as their perceptions as to the “experience” of the imagination can help to understand the strength of outcomes arising when consumers create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences. To do this, three experimental designs focusing on three specific constraints under which outcomes of the imaginative mental experiences may differ were designed and executed. Experimental designs, tested via one-way ANOVA analyses, were chosen to compare conditions and clearly understand the impact of various independent variables on the suggested outcomes derived by engaging in imaginative mental experiences.

Study 3A examines whether consumers who believe they have a small chance of attaining their desired consumption gain greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes from imaginative mental experiences than consumers who believe they have a large chance of attaining their desired consumption items. Study 3B examines whether imaginative mental experiences featuring desired consumption items that are self-expressive provide consumers with greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes than imaginative mental experiences for those items that are non-self-expressive. Study 3C examines whether the types of presumptions participants recall as part of their
imaginative mental experience – either accurate or inaccurate – allow consumers to gain greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes as well as heightened beliefs and feelings as a result of recognition of their presumptions. Evidence gathered in these studies provides partial support for the suggestion that: consumers who are less likely to experience their consumption gain greater emotion-based outcomes (H5A) and experiential outcomes from imaginative mental experiences (H5B); consumers who focus on self-expressive consumption items gain greater emotion-based outcomes (H6A) and experiential outcomes from imaginative mental experiences (H6B); and partial support that consumers who have accurate presumptions about their imaginative mental experiences gain greater experiential-based outcomes from imaginative mental experiences (H7B) as well as stronger feelings about their presumptions pertaining to their imaginative mental experiences (H7C). No evidence is provided for the suggestion that consumers who have accurate presumptions about their consumption desires gain greater emotion-based outcomes (H7A).

The results of the experimental designs provide evidence that while imaginative mental experiences offer consumers many outcomes, these outcomes can be strengthened, depending on the perception of chances, type of item focused upon, and the types of presumptions consumers form through the imaginative mental experiences regarding their consumption desires. Taken together, Study 3A, Study 3B and Study 3C build upon the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 with empirical evidence for the emotional outcomes and experiential outcomes that imaginative mental experiences provide consumers. The following sections describe the construction, execution and analysis of each study in detail.

5.4 Study 1: Unattainable Consumption Survey

5.4.1 Purpose

The unattainable consumption survey offers the opportunity to understand what influences consumers’ engagement in imaginative mental experiences when consumers identify unattainable consumption desires to help address the first research question, which asks: when consumers identify
unattainable consumption desires, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? By examining how consumers engage in imaginative mental experience behaviors as well as what activities and processes consumers engage in when they recognize unattainable consumption desires, this survey aims to broaden the scope of understanding developed through the exploratory interviews. The unattainable consumption survey also aims to contribute initial support for the hypothesis suggesting consumers who have unattainable consumption desires gain increases in how vivid their images are and subsequently enhance their experience of imaginative mental experiences (H1), and that consumers who identify unattainable consumption desires that increase perceptions of the self-concept gain increases in how vivid their images are and subsequently enhance their experience of imaginative mental experiences (H2). Findings of the unattainable consumption survey contribute to the development of the critical incident technique interview protocol (Study 2). Thus, this survey builds on the extended conceptual framework of this thesis and provides insights for the data collection to follow in Study 2 and Study 3.

5.4.2 Study Design and Procedure

A survey consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions focused on participants’ thoughts and feelings relating to an unattainable consumption item of their choice. Drawing on previous study designs employed in the literature (Fournier and Guiry 1993; MacInnis and Price 1990) the survey began by asking participants to create a “wish list” of three branded products they wished to own, and also acknowledge that would be unrealistic to own at this time. Products that are brand-specific were selected here to allow participants a frame of reference to guide their thinking on various consumption items. An open-ended question then asked participants to write a description (e.g., features, attributes and benefits) of their three desired branded products. Following this exercise, participants chose one of the three items they described previously as their focus for the remainder of the study. As the survey was estimated to take between 40 and 50 minutes to complete, asking participants to focus on one item was deemed sufficient for the purposes of data gathering in this study.
Programming of the online survey allowed each participants’ chosen item to be displayed within the text of the remaining study questions. The remainder of the study incorporated both open-ended questions and close-ended questions to focus on deriving information relating to: potential antecedents of imaginative mental experiences (perceptions of unattainability, aspects of unattainability, knowledge levels of desired item, perceptions of others as they relate to unattainability, self-concept development as a result of desired consumption); pre-purchase touchpoints (imagery, engagement with imagery, search and learning behaviors); imaginative mental experience engagement (descriptions of mental images within the mind’s eye, descriptions of possibilities of ownership, feelings surrounding imaginative mental experiences, perceptions of enjoyment, downsides to imagining unattainable consumption items); enhancement of imaginative mental experiences (feelings of enjoyment and excitement as a result of imagining, increases in desire for item); alternative consumption activities (vicarious consumption, alternative consumption items); expectations of actual consumption of desired item (importance of attaining, likelihood of attaining, feelings); general consumption habits (dreaming, wish list creation, desire); and demographics (gender, academic year).

Specifically, the open-ended questions pertaining to the experience of thinking about the desired item asked participants whether the experience of thinking about the desired consumption item is enjoyable and why or why not they think it is enjoyable. Open-ended questions also probed participants as to how the experience of thinking about the possibilities of owning their desired consumption items makes them feel and if they perceived any downsides to thinking about owning their desired consumption item. To view the complete survey, please see Appendix D.

5.4.3 Participants

Seventy-two undergraduate business school students (63% female) participated in exchange for class credit during the Winter semester of 2016. Participants were sourced through the Smith School of Business Research Study Pool and were asked to report at a designated time to a designated location with a laptop computer. The recruitment notice can be viewed in Appendix E. Groups of seven to ten students
completed the online survey during these sessions. Data checks following the study revealed twelve participants failed one or both of a check of perceived unattainability of their chosen item (“Despite wanting to purchase a [desired item] right now, I could not purchase it today.”) and a check of the interpretability of the open-ended answers; these cases were removed prior to analysis. Thus, sixty cases are present for analysis. This number is deemed sufficient for analysis as SEM can be tested reliability with sample sizes as small as 50 as simpler models can be tested with smaller samples (Hair Jr. et al. 2010). In determining a sufficient sample size, Hair Jr. et al. (2010) recommend ensuring at least five observations per variable to be analyzed, with a preference for ten observations per variable.

5.4.4 Analysis

Participants were asked to report three “wish list” items that are desirable and presently unattainable. From their own wish list, participants chose one of the three items for the focus of the remainder of the study. Items spanned a range of brands and categories; an overview of the items participants provided as part of their wish list and items chosen for the focus of the study are viewable in table 4 (Wish List Item by Category and Sub Category), table 5 (All Wish List Items by Brand Frequency), and table 6 (Selected Wish List Items by Category, Brand and Sub-Category).

Thematic analysis (Aronson 1995; Braum and Clarke 2006) is used to examine responses to open-ended questions pertaining to: why the desired item is not attainable presently; the mental images they have in mind of their desired items; the feelings they have pertaining to thinking about what it would be like to have their desired item; and the potential downsides to thinking about what it might be like to have their desired item. The thematic analysis compares information both across and within cases and then further classifies data within relevant thematic patterns.
Table 4: Study 1 – Wish List Items by Category and Sub-Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>Purse/Handbag</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outerwear</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal Wear</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wedding Dress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luggage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunglasses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Camera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smartphone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smartwatch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desktop Computer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Driving Automobile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speakers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury Watch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Equipment</td>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ski</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watersports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Study 1 – All Wish List Items By Brand Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolex</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tesla</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrari</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple, Audi, BMW, Lamborghini, Mercedes Benz</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louboutin</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burberry, Jordan Shoes, Louis Vuitton, Porsche, Tiffany’s Yeezy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celine, Givenchy, Google, Marc by Marc Jacobs, Maserati, Patek Philip, Samsung, Vera Wang</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armani, Artizia, Aston Martin, Atomic, Balenciaga, Balmain, Bauer, BlackBerry, Botkier,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Provided</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Applicable</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Study 1 – Selected Wish List Items by Category, Brand and Sub Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count of Category</th>
<th>Brands</th>
<th>Count of Sub Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luxury Automobiles</td>
<td>Audi (4), BMW (2), Ferrari (4), Lamborghini (5), Lexus (1), Maserati (1), Mertdes (2), Porsche (1), Land Rover (1), Tesla (4)</td>
<td>Vintage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Chanel (1), Celine (1), Hermes (1), Kate Spade (1), Prada (1)</td>
<td>Purse/Handbag</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Louboutin (4)</td>
<td>Heels</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burberry (1), Balenciaga (1), Reformation (1)</td>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiffany’s (2), Cartier (1)</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montcler (1), Canada Goose (1), Burberry (1)</td>
<td>Outerwear</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nike (1), Yeezy (1)</td>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elie Saab (1)</td>
<td>Formal Wear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hugo Boss (1)</td>
<td>Suit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>Harry Potter (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury Watch</td>
<td>Rolex (2), Michael Kors (1), Patek Philip (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patek Philip (1)</td>
<td>Pocket Watch</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care</td>
<td>KissTixx (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Bauer (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Speedo (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Pentax (1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samsung (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apple (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial analyses of closed-ended questions involved an exploratory factor analysis to examine all scale items employed within the study to determine relevant composite measures. Many scales drawn from the literature did not conform to factors as expected; thus, these items were removed from analysis. A summary of item measures used in the analysis relevant to this research’s hypotheses can be found in Appendix F.

To focus specifically on the two hypotheses central to this study, a confirmatory factor analysis is used to examine evidence of item convergence for the theorized constructs of imaginative mental experience engagement (3 items, $\alpha = 0.84$) and self-concept enhancement (3 items, $\alpha = 0.69$). There were originally two items associated to the measure for vividness, however, correlation analysis demonstrates each item should be viewed independently, and one item is selected as a direct measure of vividness of mental imagery. Similarly, perceptions of unattainability involved a single item measure drawn from the study that confirmed that consumers, despite wanting to purchase their desired item, agree they cannot purchase that item at the present time. The CFA results pertaining to the two scales used to evaluate the hypotheses can be seen in table 7.

### Table 7: Study 1 – Unattainable Consumption Survey CFA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure:</th>
<th>SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT</th>
<th>IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON1</td>
<td>Est. 1.000</td>
<td>Std. 0.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON2</td>
<td>Est. 1.286</td>
<td>Std. 0.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON3</td>
<td>Est. 0.632</td>
<td>Std. 0.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IME1</td>
<td>Est. 1.000</td>
<td>Std. 0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IME2</td>
<td>Est. 1.408</td>
<td>Std. 0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IME3</td>
<td>Est. 1.169</td>
<td>Std. 0.734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Model Indices: $X^2 = 0.366, DF = 8, X^2(DF) = 15, CFI = 0.994, RMSEA = 0.039, SRMR = 0.049*

To ensure construct reliability Hair et al. (2010) suggest standardized loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher; one item within the self-concept enhancement scale is slightly below this threshold (0.461). Construct reliability across both the self-concept enhancement scale ($\alpha = 0.70$) and the imaginative mental experience engagement scale ($\alpha = 0.85$), demonstrates sufficient internal consistency. Reviewing
average variance explained as a measure of convergent validity, we see that applying a threshold of 0.5, the self-concept enhancement scale (AVE = 0.45) is just below this threshold and the imaginative mental experience engagement scale (AVE = 0.65) is just above this threshold. Comparing AVE and the square of the correlation between both factors demonstrates that there is sufficient discriminant validity ($r^2 = 0.43$).

Using the confirmed factors and single-item measures within the dataset, the suggested hypotheses are examined using SEM. This method is applied to explain the relationships among multiple variables. This was completed through the R statistical software, applying the “sem” package. SEM provides an easy and effective way to view the regression results pertaining to the hypotheses of interest in this study. A complete discussion of the results is found in Chapter 6.

5.5 Study 2: Critical Incident Technique Interviews

5.5.1 Purpose

To better understand the consumer experience of engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is not presently attainable, a series of critical incident interviews (CIT interviews) were conducted. The interviews aim to better understand the experiences consumers create through the imagination, as well as the activities consumers engage in when developing imaginative mental experiences and how consumers reflect upon their imaginative mental experiences relative to their current reality to provide evidence for the second research question, which asks: what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences to explore unattainable consumption desires? As well, the CIT interviews provide support for my hypotheses that as consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences increase their clarity of their desired future consumption experiences (H3), and increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities (H4). While the exploratory interviews guiding the conceptual development of this thesis focus on deriving support for the notion of imaginative mental experiences, the
interviews in Study 2 build on insights developed through the exploratory interviews and the consumer survey (Study 1) to deepen our understanding of the consumer’s experience via imaginative mental experiences. The objective of the critical incident technique interviews is to describe and understand the imaginative experience gained through imaginative mental experiences. Thus, the critical incident technique interview analysis aims to: deepen the understanding of how consumers experience unattainability; provide direct insights into the experiences consumers create via imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption desires; and, understand the perceived descriptive outcomes consumers report experiencing as a result of engaging in imaginative mental experiences.

To do this, the critical incident technique (CIT) procedure is selected as it allows for the collection of facts concerning behavior in defined situations (Flanagan 1954). With more than 50 years of research conducted through the CIT method across many different fields of research, the CIT is widely cited as an effective exploratory and investigative tool (Butterfield et al. 2005). Thus, the CIT offers a systematic way of gathering actual consumer experiences with imaginative mental experiences. As the phenomena of imaginative mental experiences is highly individualized, the CIT gathers information by reviewing the respondent’s own perspective on their experience (Gremler 2004).

5.5.2 Protocol Design

The CIT aims to derive insights through applying objectivity; Flanagan (1954) suggests objectivity is found through the tendency for the data to show a number of independent participants making the same report. Thus, the interview protocol is designed to offer consistency and rigor to the interview process while also allowing flexibility for each participant to drive the conversation, based on their own individual consumption desire of interest.

Flanagan (1954) suggests there are many ways to collect information, including individual or group interviews, questionnaires, and record forms; Chell (2004) more recently advocates for data collection to be conducted solely through an interview format that allows each participant to determine
the context which is most relevant to the individual. Thus, conducting interviews with individual participants reveals rich, consistent and comparable insights across participants.

A standardized interview protocol was developed that guided participants to recall a personally-relevant imaginative mental experience while also gathering consistent evidence of imaginative mental experiences across cases. The interview protocol consists of themes based on the conceptual framework and each theme contains relevant guiding questions. The protocol therefore provides a clear process and flow for each interview, yet allows the flexibility to probe the participant for additional detail and ensures that relevant topic areas are covered during the interview. Please see Appendix G for the CIT interview protocol.

Each interview followed the same format; consistent with recommendations of Chell (2004) and Borgen et al. (2008), interviews began with an introduction to the research project aims and methodological format as well as building rapport with the participant. Then, participants were guided through defining relevant consumption desires that are unattainable and elaborating on relevant imaginative mental experience incidents related to those desires. For most participants, only one consumption desire was spoken about, however in a few cases, more than one item was discussed. Each interview concluded with questions regarding demographics.

5.5.3 Participants

Eighteen consumer interviews were completed during the Summer of 2016. Ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 66 years of age ($M = 31$). Of the 18 participants (72% female), household annual income levels ranged between $10,000/year CAD to $250,000/year CAD ($M = $97,500/year CAD). All participants were Canadian citizens; one participant was living abroad at the time of the interview and all participants were personal connections sourced through email introductions. To view the recruitment email template used to engage participants, please see Appendix H. Interviews were conducted through a variety of means, including: in person, telephone, and video-based conversations. All
interviewees consented to being recorded; transcription of the interviews was completed in preparation for analysis.

In determining sample size, Flanagan (1954) specifically focuses not on the number of participants, but the number of total incidents collected, as it is possible that various participants submit more than one incident. A study is deemed completed when a significant increase in additional incidents would not yield additional categorical insights unique from what is already collected. Eighteen interviews were deemed sufficient due to no new categories, unique from what was already attained, arising.

5.5.4 Analysis

Following transcription, analysis of gathered interview data involved two stages: categorization and interpretation. Butterfield et al. (2005) recommend that the criteria for inclusion of gathered data in the analysis encompasses: antecedent information (what led to the incident), a detailed description of the experience; and a description of the outcomes of the incident. Thus, these criteria are employed as a screening of the data prior to inclusion for categorization.

Categorization, the main goal of organizing the collected data prior to interpretation, occurred simultaneously with data collection so that an inductive and emergent categorization scheme was developed and saturation could be determined. Application of the draft categorization scheme to the data was applied through an online data management software program (QCAMap) for ease of organization and coded segments were extracted from the total corpus for review and interpretation.

Prior to interpretation commencing, credibility or validity checks of the data are required. Various approaches are taken over time; however, Butterfield et al. (2005) and Borgen et al. (2008) recommend employing as many checks as possible. In this study, participation rates, representing the percentage of participants from which coded data falls within a category (25% participation is required to justify retaining the category), is employed. A complete list of categories and participation rates is found in table 8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Perceived fit of desired item/experience with lifestyle</td>
<td>Descriptions that suggest how desired consumption item will fit into their life, how the item may or may not change their life, or how they hope it will fit with their current or desired future lifestyle.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Background information on desired item/experience</td>
<td>Descriptive information as to the origin of desire. These descriptions may mention the functional benefits desired (e.g., a car gets you from A to B), how the desire has built over time, past experiences that informed their desire for this item, personal traits or qualities that their desires are related to, or specific outcomes that would be supported through the desired item.</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Reasons for present unattainability of desired item/experience; expressions of hope for potential attainability in the future</td>
<td>Descriptions of why the desired item is presently out of reach and cannot or will not be attained at this time as well as language expressing thoughts about potential attainability (e.g., when, how soon) in the future.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Self-perceptions and self-other perceptions related to desired item/experience</td>
<td>Descriptions of how the individual views themselves in relation to their consumption desires as well as their relation to others with respect to their desired consumption item. May suggest how they think this consumption item will alter or improve their own sense of self or involve how they believe others will perceive them if they are to attain their desired consumption item.</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 IME (Imaginative mental experiences)</td>
<td>Descriptions of the imaginative mental experience. This may include the imaginative scenarios developed in the mind, imagery, possible scenarios involving the desired consumption item, drawing on past experiences to create an imagined experience, feelings that arise as a result of the experience, featuring other individuals within their imagined experience, limits or flexibility of the experience they create.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 IME: Recognition that expectations and reality may not match</td>
<td>Descriptions of reflections on IME experiences, feelings, thoughts and images and how these may not match their expectations of future experience with consumption.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 IME: Alternatives and trade-offs</td>
<td>Descriptions of alternative items or consumption solutions they are willing to consider or aim for as alternatives. Also includes descriptions of how they may be willing to make tradeoffs to achieve their desired consumption item/experience.</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Info gathering activities</td>
<td>Descriptions of the ways in which consumers gather information (either passively or actively) on their desired consumption items. May include information about the brand of interest or other competing brand alternatives, as well as brand knowledge demonstrations and specific acts that prepare them for consumption in the future.</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Other desired items that are mentioned, but not subject to IME at the moment</td>
<td>Descriptions of other items that are desired but are not subject to IME experiences at this time.</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, 25% of the coded segments placed within the tentative categorization scheme were extracted to complete an inter-rater reliability check of the coding scheme. A matching rate of 75% to 85% is required, in order to consider the tentative categorization scheme credible (Borgen, Amundson, and Butterfield 2008; Butterfield et al. 2005). Two secondary coders were engaged to complete an inter-rater reliability check of the coding scheme applied to the extracted data. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved, reaching a 92% matching rate, deemed sufficient for this methodological approach (Borgen, Amundson, and Butterfield 2008). Content analysis procedures were then applied to the categorized data to discover relevant themes, allowing a sub-categorization scheme to emerge through systematic review of each of the main categories. Content analysis is an objective, systematic, and quantitative approach to qualitative data (Kassarjian 1977) and is applied here to examine the contents of the data within each of the inductive categories established through data gathering phase of the CIT interviews. According to Kerlinger (1986, p. 477) content analysis is “a method of studying and analyzing communications in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner to measure variables.” Content analysis offers an unobtrusive appraisal of data to yield categorical data (Kolbe and Burnett 1991).

Several of the findings of the CIT interviews lend themselves to further exploration within an experimental context. In the following sections, three experimental designs based on the findings of the CIT interviews are discussed.

5.6 Study 3A: Small and Large Chances of Consumption Desires

5.6.1 Purpose

Following from Study 1 and Study 2, three experimental designs were devised to examine three specific situations in which the outcomes of imaginative mental experiences may vary, to support the third research question, which asks: what outcomes do consumers gain from engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is deemed unattainable? Study 3A aims to develop evidence for differences in the outcomes of imaginative mental experiences engagement based on the perceptions
consumers have of how large or small their perceived chances of consuming their desired consumption item in the future. Through evidence gained in Study 2, it appears consumers often have differing views on unattainability; some are very confident they will achieve their consumption desires at some point in the future, while others suggest that while consumption is desired, the likelihood of attaining their consumption desires is very, very slim. This presents an opportunity to understand whether consumers who perceive their consumption desires to be relatively less likely (smaller chances) gain greater outcomes from the imaginative mental experience, as this may be their only touchpoint to their actual desires.

5.6.2 Participants

Sixty-six undergraduate business school participated in exchange for class credit during the Winter semester of 2018. Participants were sourced through the Smith School of Business Research Study Pool and were asked to report at a designated time to a designated location with a laptop computer. The recruitment notice can be viewed in Appendix I. Groups of 15-20 students completed the online survey during these sessions. Seven cases were removed from analysis due to either failing the manipulation check at the end of the survey or having inconsistencies in their qualitative data pertaining to their assigned condition. Thus, fifty-eight cases are available for analysis (50% female). Post-hoc power analysis demonstrates that for an effect size of 0.50 (error = 0.05) the power of this test is 0.96. A medium effect size of .50 was chosen rather than a smaller effect size to avoid subtle effects driven by sample size that would overpower the study.

5.6.3 Study Design and Procedure

A one-factor design with two conditions (small chances, large chances) was employed. Participants in the small chances condition were asked to identify a consumption item that is “very appealing to you, but that you also recognize will be extremely unlikely that you will ever experience.” Participants in the large chances condition were similarly asked to identify a consumption item that is
“very appealing to you, but that you have not yet experienced.” Manipulation text for each condition can be viewed in Appendix J.

The study randomly assigned participants to either the large or small chances conditions; each study session involved only one manipulation, and this was confirmed by a verbal preamble describing the study to participants prior to beginning the online study. Once participants identified their chosen consumption item, they were asked to free-write why the item is presently unattainable and when (if ever) they expected to purchase the item in the future. Follow up questions were asked to gain a sense of what consumers perceive themselves to already know about the item (SPK, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.92$), determine whether they have previously engaged in imaginative mental experiences (SPIME, 2 items, $r = 0.70$), and single item measures of their general interest level in the item, and perceived likelihood of attainment.

All participants then completed a three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task. Participants were asked to imagine what it would be like to have the item they previously stated they desired and were asked to write out a description of the experience they imagine. The page did not advance until three-minutes has elapsed, ensuring participants did not feel a need to rush forward with the remainder of the study. An attention check followed this manipulation to ensure participants were actively engaged in the study. Following the three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task, participants were asked several questions pertaining to potential experiential outcomes, including: how vivid the imaginative mental experience is (VIVIDIME, 2 items, $r = 0.71$), how engaged in the imaginative mental experience they were (IMEENG, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.84$), whether their feelings of desire were heightened (DESIRE, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.82$), and how satisfying the imaginative mental experience is (IMESAT, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.76$). Questions pertaining to emotion-based outcomes included measures of both positive emotions (POSITIVE EMO, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.93$) and negative emotions (NEGATIVE EMO, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.75$). Control variables such as overall life satisfaction (LIFESAT, 5 items, $\alpha = 0.91$), and perceptions that the desired item would enhance their self-concept (SELFCON, 2 items, $r = 0.79$) and a single-item manipulation check were presented at the end of the study in addition to questions pertaining to gender
and academic year of study. To view reliability information for Study 3A, please see table 9. For a complete list of item measures included in the study, please see Appendix K.

Table 9: Study 3A – Small versus Large Chances Scale Alphas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>CFA Code</th>
<th>Study 3A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>3 0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>2 0.70 (r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDNESS OF IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>2 0.71 (r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>3 0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIGHTNED EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>3 0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>3 0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EMOTIONS</td>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>4 0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EMOTIONS</td>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>3 0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT</td>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>2 0.79 (r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE SATISFACTION</td>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>5 0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.4 Analysis

Open-ended questions pertaining to perceptions of unattainability were subject to thematic analysis consistent with previous analyses; statistical analysis using R was applied to the quantitative data. A CFA was conducted to validate multi-item measures, consistent with the procedures of Study 1. CFA results can be seen in table 10. In cases where items did not load to the expected construct in a meaningful way, the item was dropped. Review of CFA indices suggest there is good fit for the model.
Table 10: Study 3A – Small versus Large Chances CFA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>SPK</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVIDIME</th>
<th>IMEENG</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Est</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>Est</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>Est</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK2</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK4</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME3</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG1</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>IMEENG2</td>
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<td>IMEENG7</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESIRE1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRE2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>IMESAT</th>
<th>NEGATIVE EMO</th>
<th>POSITIVE EMO</th>
<th>SELFCON</th>
<th>LIFESAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Est</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>Est</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>Est</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMESAT1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.66</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMESAT2</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMESAT3</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EMO3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.65</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFESAT1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFESAT2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFESAT3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFESAT4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFESAT5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Indices: $X^2 = 558, df = 360, X^2(df) = 435, SRMR = 0.093, RMSEA = 0.098, CFI = 0.835$

To ensure sufficient convergent validity is present, both the factor loadings and reliability, calculated by examining the squared sum of factor loadings and the sum of error variance terms, are examined. These figures, viewable in Table 11, suggest that all constructs meet the threshold of .6 or .7 recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Additionally, all factor loadings are greater than .5, with the majority above .7. To review discriminant validity, average variance explained is calculated by taking the average of the squared standardized estimates is compared to the squared correlation estimated between two
constructs. All constructs show greater AVE values, suggesting sufficient discriminant validity, and are viewable in Table 11.

Table 11: Study 3A – Small versus Large Chances Convergent and Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVID</th>
<th>IME</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
<th>IMESAT</th>
<th>NEGATIVE EMO</th>
<th>POSITIVE EMO</th>
<th>SELFCON</th>
<th>LIFESAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.020</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.315</td>
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<td>0.088</td>
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<td>DESIRES</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.609</td>
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<td>0.520</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.243</td>
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<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.304</td>
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<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.615</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis comparing the small chances condition to the large chances condition were completed using one-way ANOVA tests. Checks of the manipulation involved reviewing differences between the small chances and large chances conditions on a single-item measure placed near the end of the study; it asked participants to rate the chances they would experience their consumption item in their life (Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely, 1-7). Significant results confirm participants in the small chances condition ($M = 2.95$) differ from those in the large chances condition ($M = 6.75$) ($F(1, 56) = 252.50$, $p = 0.000$) in their perceptions of whether they will experience their consumption item in their lifetime. Additional support for the manipulation is found in a single-item measure of the participants’ perceived likelihood of attaining their desired item in the future being greater in the large chances condition ($M =$
6.62) than the small chances condition \((M = 3.03)\) \((F(1, 56) = 180.70, p = 0.000)\). Measures of the importance of attaining the desired item also differs significantly \((F(1, 56) = 22.49, p = 0.000)\) across those in the large chances condition \((M = 5.27)\) and small chances condition \((M = 3.75)\), supporting the suggestion that consumers view the important of desired consumption items differently, depending on the perception of chances of attainment. Additional comparisons of general knowledge \((F(1, 56) = 5.464, p = 0.023)\) demonstrate that those in the large chances condition \((M = 4.75)\) have significantly higher knowledge of their desires than those in the small chances condition \((M = 3.75)\). Practically speaking, given the overlapping nature of the confidence intervals and the interpretation of the mean values, the interpretation of this finding suggests that knowledge levels are likely not affecting the manipulation. Similarly, comparisons of interest level \((F(1, 56) = 5.87, p = 0.019)\) in their chosen consumption item reveal significant differences between conditions, yet practical interpretation of the confidence intervals suggests that interest levels likely do not affect the manipulation. Control measures are summarized in table 12. Detailed results are found in Chapter 5.

Table 12: Study 3A – Small Chances versus Large Chances One-Way ANOVA Control Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Small Chances</th>
<th></th>
<th>Large Chances</th>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition Check of Perceived Chances</td>
<td>2.95, CI: 2.50, 3.42</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>6.75, CI: 6.59, 6.92</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>252.50</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Attaining in the Future</td>
<td>3.75, CI: 3.30, 4.20</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>5.27, CI: 4.80, 5.75</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of Attaining Item in the Future</td>
<td>3.03, CI: 2.56, 3.50</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>6.62, CI: 6.34, 6.89</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>180.70</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Interest in Desired Item</td>
<td>5.20, CI: 4.82, 5.59</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>5.79, CI: 5.48, 6.10</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>0.019 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge of Item</td>
<td>3.75, CI: 3.12, 4.39</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>4.75, CI: 4.15, 5.36</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.023 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.7 Study 3B: Self-Expression of Consumption Desires

5.7.1 Purpose

The second experiment is designed to explore findings from Study 2 which suggest unattainable consumption items are typically related to self-expression. Study 3B aims to develop evidence that consumers gain greater benefits from imaginative mental experiences when they focus on desired consumption items that are perceived as self-expressive by the individual (rather than desired, but not perceived as self-expressive by the individual). As suggested in Study 2, consumers focus their imaginative mental experiences on consumption desires that support their understanding of who they are or who they wish to become, rather than items that are simply high-value, luxury goods, or attractive for other reasons. Thus, this experiment looks at the possibility that consumers who focus on self-expressive consumption desires gain greater value from the imaginative mental experience process to develop support for the third research question.

5.7.1.1 Pre-Test

A pre-test (N = 123, 53% female) was designed to develop the study’s manipulation for the low-self-expression condition. The recruitment notice can be viewed in Appendix I. The pre-test was designed so that participants would be asked to rate pre-selected consumption items that were desired but not yet owned by participants (e.g., television, toaster oven, 3D printer, car) on a scale of 1 to 5 that specifically sought to see whether participants recognized items as “self-expressive” (endpoints: “not at all expressive of who I am or who I wish to be” – “Extremely expressive of who I am or who I wish to be”). After completing their ratings on the consumption items, participants were shown the items they rated as a value of “one” on the previous question and were asked to free-write descriptions of why they felt the items are not at all expressive of who they are or wish to be. Review of both the counts of items rated as low on expressiveness and the qualitative answers led to the selection of three items (Television – desired by 88%, \(M_{se} = 2.63\); toaster oven – desired by 70%, \(M_{se} = 2.05\); Stand Mixer – desired by 60%, \(M_{se} = 94\)
2.27) as the manipulation stimuli choices in the main study. These items were selected for having the lowest average self-expression scores and highest interest in ownership; statistics are viewable in table 13. Qualitative answers pertaining to why participants felt the item is not expressive to the self were also reviewed to validate the selection of the items for the manipulation.

Table 13: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non Self-Expressive Pre-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% Desire Item &amp; Do Not Own</th>
<th>Average Self-Expression Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toaster Oven</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots Sweatpants</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keurig Coffeemaker</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KitchenAid Stand Mixer</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nest Thermostat</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hershel Backpack</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS4</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nintendo Switch</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beats Headphones</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Smartphone</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-D Printer</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oculus Rift Headset</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLR Camera</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitbit</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Watch</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJI Drone</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather jacket</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7.2 Participants

Sixty-eight undergraduate business school students participated in exchange for class credit during the Fall semester of 2017. Participants were sourced consistent with the process employed for Study 3A; the recruitment notice can be viewed in Appendix I. Six cases were removed due to failing manipulation checks and inconsistencies in the qualitative data, thus sixty-two cases are available for
analysis (43% female). Post-hoc power analysis demonstrates that for an effect size of 0.50 (error = 0.05) the power of this test is 0.97. Consistent with Study 3A, a medium effect size of .50 was chosen rather than a smaller effect size to effect size to avoid subtle effects driven by sample size that would overpower the study.

5.7.3 Study Design and Procedure

A one-factor design with two conditions (high self-expression, low self-expression) was employed. Participants in the high self-expression condition were asked to identify a consumption item of interest they have not yet purchased but are interested in potentially acquiring in the future. Participants in the low self-expression condition were given the choice of three consumption items (television, toaster oven, stand mixer) and were asked to select one item they desired and potentially would purchase in the future to focus on. Three choices were offered to participants in this condition to ensure participants in the non-self-expressive condition also were active participants in the selection of the item to focus on for the study, consistent with the self-expressive condition. Of the 32 participants assigned to the non-self-expressive condition, 24 (75%) selected the television, six (19%) selected to toaster oven, and two (6%) selected the stand mixer. Manipulation text for each condition can be viewed in Appendix L.

The study randomly assigned participants to either the high or low self-expression condition. Once participants identified their chosen consumption item, they were asked to free-write why the item is presently unattainable and when, if ever, they expected to purchase the item in the future. Questions prior to the imaginative mental experience engagement exercise included whether participants previously have engaged in imaginative mental experiences of the consumption item (SPIME, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.90$) and perceived knowledge of the consumption item (SPK, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.90$). All participants then competed the three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task that is also employed in Study 3A. An attention check followed this manipulation to ensure participants were actively engaged. Following the three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task, participants were asked several questions pertaining to potential experiential outcomes, including: how vivid the imaginative mental experience is
(VIVIDIME, 2 items, $r = 0.90$), how engaged in the imaginative mental experience they were (IMEENG, 7 items, $\alpha = 0.94$), whether their feelings of desire were heightened (DESIRE, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.91$), and how satisfying the imaginative mental experience is (IMESAT, 2 items, $\alpha = 0.72$). Questions pertaining to emotion-based outcomes included measures of both positive emotions (POSITIVE EMO, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.81$) and negative emotions (NEGATIVE EMO, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.95$). Control variables such as overall life satisfaction (LIFESAT, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.85$), perceptions that the desired item would enhance their self-concept (SELFCON, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.87$), as well as a manipulation check pertaining to perceptions of self-expression of the chosen consumption item and perceptions of mental effort closed the study, in addition to questions pertaining to gender and academic year. Study measures were consistent with measures used in Study 3A and a summary of the item measures used in Study 3B can be viewed in Appendix M. To view reliability information for Study 3B, please see table 14.

Table 14: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non-Self-Expressive Alphas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>CFA Code</th>
<th>Study 3B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDNESS OF IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCES</td>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIGHTNED EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EMOTIONS</td>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EMOTIONS</td>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT</td>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE SATISFACTION</td>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.7.4 Analysis

Open-ended questions were subject to thematic analysis consistent with previous analyses.

Statistical analysis using R was applied to the quantitative data. A CFA was conducted to validate multi-item measures, consistent with Study 1 and Study 3A. CFA results can be seen in table 15. In cases where items did not load to the expected construct in a meaningful way, the item was dropped. Review of CFA indices suggest there is good fit for the model.

To ensure sufficient convergent validity is present, both the factor loadings and reliability, calculated by examining the squared sum of factor loadings and the sum of error variance terms, are examined, consistent with Study 3A. These figures, viewable in table 16, suggest that all constructs meet the threshold of .6 or .7 recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Additionally, all factor loadings are greater than .5, with the majority above .7. To review discriminant validity, average variance explained is calculated by taking the average of the squared standardized estimates is compared to the squared correlation estimated between two constructs. One construct correlation is higher than expected; the AVE for the imaginative mental experience engagement construct is 0.70 while the squared correlation with the heightened sense of desire scale is 0.848. Overall, there is good evidence of discriminant validity, and statistics are viewable in table 16.
Table 15: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non Self-Expressive CFA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>SPK</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVIDIME</th>
<th>IMEENG</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPK1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK3</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPK4</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRE1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRE2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRE5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Measure | IMESAT | EMO2 | EMO3 | EMO8 | EMO10 | EMO1 | EMO4 | EMO5 | EMO6 | SELFCON1 | SELFCON2 | SELFCON3 | LIFESAT1 | LIFESAT2 | LIFESAT3 | LIFESAT4 |
|---------|--------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| IMESAT1 | 1.00   | 0.81 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| IMESAT2 | 0.98   | 0.90 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO2    | 1.00   | 0.68 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO3    | 1.36   | 0.76 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO8    | 0.84   | 0.67 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO10   | 1.48   | 0.77 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO1    | 1.00   | 0.88 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO4    | 1.02   | 0.87 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO5    | 1.02   | 0.93 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| EMO6    | 1.05   | 0.94 |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| SELFCON1|        |      | 1.00 | 0.85 |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| SELFCON2|        |      | 1.09 | 0.89 |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| SELFCON3|        |      | 0.86 | 0.76 |       |      |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| LIFESAT1|        |      |      |      | 1.00  | 0.64 |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| LIFESAT2|        |      |      |      | 1.03  | 0.79 |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| LIFESAT3|        |      |      |      | 1.23  | 0.95 |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| LIFESAT4|        |      |      |      | 0.97  | 0.68 |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |

Model Indices: $X^2 = 923.08$, $df = 549$, $X^2(df) = 630$, SRMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.10, CFI = 0.820
Table 16: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non Self-Expressive

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>(\alpha)</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVIDIME</th>
<th>IMEENG</th>
<th>DESIRES</th>
<th>IMESAT</th>
<th>NEGATIVE EMO</th>
<th>POSITIVE EMO</th>
<th>SELFCON</th>
<th>LIFESAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.291</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.534</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRES</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

To ensure sufficient differences exist across conditions, one-way ANOVA tests of the responses to the manipulation check question on a scale of 1-7 (“Thinking back to the item we asked you to focus on in this study, how self-expressive do you feel this item is to who you are or who you wish to be?” Not at all expressive of who I am or who I wish to be – Extremely expressive of who I am or who I wish to be) suggest sufficient differences exist \((F(1, 60) = 37.96, p = 0.000)\) between the self-expressive condition \((M = 4.83)\) and the non-self-expressive condition \((M = 2.90)\). Subsequent checks of perceptions of how likely participants felt they are to attain the item in their lifetime shows no difference across conditions \((M_{se} = 6.40; M_{nse} = 6.50)\) confirming that whether they are likely or not to attain the item is not affecting the manipulation \((F(1, 60) = 0.17, p = 0.678)\). Similarly, how knowledgeable participants believe they are
about their chosen consumption items does not differ across conditions ($M_{se} = 4.76$; $M_{nse} = 4.53$), which therefore does not impede with the effect of the manipulation ($F(1,60) = 0.54, p = 0.465$).

When measuring how important it is to eventually attain the item, a significant difference exists across conditions in that the self-expressive condition ($M = 5.03$) have stronger feelings about eventually attaining their desired items than the non-self-expressive condition ($M = 4.25$) ($F(1, 60) = 4.78, p = 0.031$). While importance does differ across conditions, this is logical, given that participants who focus on self-expressive items would likely view these items are more important to attain, due to their connections with the self-concept development. Consistent with this, there is a significant difference between the self-expressive condition ($M = 5.66$) and the non-self-expressive condition ($M = 4.84$) when examining how interested participants are in their selected consumption item ($F(1, 60) = 5.99, p = 0.017$). Lastly, a control check for degree of mental effort was included at the end of the study to confirm that choosing between three different options in the non-self-expressive condition ($M = 4.43$) is not more mentally taxing than choosing an unprompted item in the self-expressive condition ($M = 4.40$) ($F(1, 60) = 0.12, p = 0.730$). Control measure statistics are provided in table 17. Chapter 5 provides detailed results.

Table 17: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non Self-Expressive

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Non-Self-Expressive</th>
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<th>Self-Expressive</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition Check of Self-Expression</td>
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<td>1.47</td>
<td>CI: 4.49, 5.17</td>
<td>0.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of Attaining in the Future</td>
<td>CI: 3.77, 4.72</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>CI: 4.48, 5.58</td>
<td>1.47</td>
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<td>Likelihood of Attaining in the Future</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
<td>CI: 6.02, 6.77</td>
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<td>General Interest in Desired Item</td>
<td>CI: 4.29, 5.39</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>CI: 5.27, 6.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Knowledge of Item</td>
<td>CI: 4.13, 4.93</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>CI: 4.24, 5.29</td>
<td>4.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of Mental Effort</td>
<td>CI: 3.85, 5.02</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>CI: 3.74, 4.85</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5 provides detailed results.
5.8 Study 3C: Imaginative Mental Experience Presumptions and Chances of Consumption Desires

5.8.1 Purpose

Study 3C aims to develop evidence that consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences embed presumptions about the potential outcomes that would arise from consumption within their imaginative mental experiences. For consumers whose presumptions are, upon reflection, seemingly more accurate than inaccurate, it is expected these consumers experience greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, as well as greater sense that what their imaginative mental experience entails is believable and likely. As Study 2 suggests, many consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences recognize their imaginative mental experiences may not fully reflect reality, yet they are still able to engage and enjoy the experience of imagination.

5.8.2 Participants

One hundred and twenty-six undergraduate business school students participated in exchange for class credit during the Winter semester of 2018. Participants were sourced consistent with the process employed for Study 3A and 3B; the recruitment notice can be viewed in Appendix I. Twenty-three cases were removed due to failing either the condition manipulation check, the engagement check or having inconsistencies in the qualitative data, thus 103 cases are available for analysis (58% female). Post-hoc power analysis demonstrates that for an effect size of 0.50 (error = 0.05) the power of this test is 0.99. Consistent with Study 3A and 3B, a medium effect size of .50 was chosen rather than a smaller effect size to effect size to avoid subtle effects driven by sample size that would overpower the study.

5.8.3 Study Design and Procedure

A 2 (small chances of consumption, large chances of consumption) x 2 (inaccurate presumptions, accurate presumptions) design was employed. Participants in the small chances condition were asked to identify a consumption item that is “very appealing to you, but that you also recognize will be extremely
unlikely that you will ever experience.” Participants in the large chances condition were similarly asked to identify a consumption item that is “very appealing to you, but that you have not yet experienced.” This condition is repeated from Study 3A to understand if there are effects of perceptions of chances that interact with the presumptions consumers form through the imaginative mental experiences.

Consistent with Study 3A, participants were randomly assigned to either the large or small chances conditions; each study session involved only one manipulation and this was confirmed by a verbal preamble describing the study to participants prior to beginning the online study. Once participants identified their chosen consumption item, they were asked to free-write why the item is presently unattainable and when (if ever) they expected to purchase the item in the future. Follow up questions were consistent with previous studies and asked consumers what they already know about the item (SPK, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.90$), whether they have previously engaged in imaginative mental experiences (SPIME, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.90$), and single item responses of their general interest level in the item, and perceived likelihood of attainment.

All participants then completed the three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task consistent with Study 3A and Study 3B. An attention check followed this manipulation to ensure participants were actively engaged. Following the three-minute imaginative mental experience writing task, participants were randomly assigned to either the inaccurate presumptions condition or the accurate presumptions condition. In each condition, participants were asked to reflect on what they had wrote about the imaginative experience for their desired item and it was suggested there are parts of the individual imagination that presume something about the experience that may occur in reality. Participants were then asked to identify up to three different presumptions that either accurately or inaccurately (depending on condition assignment) reflect what they believe the experience of their desired item will be like. The manipulation text for the inaccurate/accurate condition is found in Appendix N.

Immediate follow up questions pertained to ratings of the likelihood of each individual presumption as well as percentage chance ratings of each presumption. Then, the first presumption text
entry is carried through and several questions examined the presumptions on measures of their beliefs about their presumptions experiences (6 items, $\alpha = 0.95$) as well as their feelings arising from their presumption experiences (4 items, $\alpha = 0.91$).

Following these questions, the same imaginative mental experience follow up questions used in Study 3A and Study 3B were asked pertaining to potential experiential outcomes, including: how vivid the imaginative mental experience is (VIVIDIME, 2 items, $r = 0.90$), how engaged in the imaginative mental experience they were (IMENG, 5 items, $\alpha = 0.94$), whether their feelings of desire were heightened (DESIRE, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.91$), and how satisfying the imaginative mental experience is (IMESAT, 2 items, $r = 0.72$). Questions pertaining to emotion-based outcomes included measures of both positive emotions (POSITIVE EMO, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.95$) and negative emotions (NEGATIVE EMO, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.81$). Measures pertaining specifically to the perceptions of the participants’ beliefs in their own presumptions (PREBELIEF, 6 items, $\alpha = 0.95$) and positive feelings towards their own presumptions were also included (PREFEEL, 4 items, $\alpha = 0.91$). Of Control variables such as overall life satisfaction (LIFESAT, 5 items, $\alpha = 0.88$), and perceptions that the desired item would enhance their self-concept (SELFCON, 3 items, $r = 0.87$) and a single-item manipulation check were presented at the end of the study in addition to questions pertaining to gender and academic year. To view reliability information for Study 3C, please see table 18. For a complete list of item measures included in the study, please see Appendix O.
Table 18: Study 3C – Inaccurate versus Accurate Perceptions Alphas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>CFA Code</th>
<th>Study 3C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td># of items</td>
</tr>
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<td>SUBJECTIVE PRIOR IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRESUMPTION BELIEFS SCALE</td>
<td>PREBELIEF</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRESUMPTION FEELINGS SCALE</td>
<td>PREFEELING</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>VIVIDNESS OF IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERENCES</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIGHTNED FEELINGS OF DESIRE</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
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<td>SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIFESATISFACTION</td>
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5.8.4 Analysis

Open-ended questions pertaining to perceptions of unattainability were subject to thematic analysis consistent with previous analyses; statistical analysis using R was applied to the quantitative data. A CFA was conducted to validate multi-item measures, consistent with the procedures of Study 1, Study 3A and Study 3B. CFA results can be seen in table 19. In cases where items did not load to the expected construct in a meaningful way, the item was dropped. Review of CFA indices suggest there is good fit for the model.
### Table 19: Study 3C – Inaccurate versus Accurate Presumptions CFA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>SPK</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVIDIME</th>
<th>IMEENG</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
<th>IMESAT</th>
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<td>Est.</td>
<td>Std.</td>
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</table>

Model Indices: $X^2 = 1273$, $df = 879$, $X^2(df) = 990$, SRMR = 0.069, RMSEA = 0.066, CFI = 0.891
To ensure sufficient convergent validity is present, both the factor loadings and reliability, calculated by examining the squared sum of factor loadings and the sum of error variance terms, are examined, consistent with Study 3A and Study 3B. These figures, viewable in table 20, suggest that all constructs meet the threshold of .6 or .7 recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Additionally, all factor loadings are greater than .5, with the majority above .7. To review discriminant validity, average variance explained is calculated by taking the average of the squared standardized estimates is compared to the squared correlation estimated between two constructs. Overall, there is good evidence of discriminant validity, and statistics are viewable in table 20.

Table 20: Study 3C – Inaccurate versus Accurate Presumptions

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>SPIME</th>
<th>VIVIDIME</th>
<th>IME</th>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
<th>IMESAT</th>
<th>NEGATIVE EMO</th>
<th>POSITIVE EMO</th>
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<th>LIFESAT</th>
<th>PREBELIEF</th>
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<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIRES</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.537</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREBELIEF</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFERE</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Checks of the small and large chances manipulation involved reviewing differences between the conditions on a single-item measure placed near the end of the study; consistent with Study 3A, it asked participants to rate the chances they would experience their consumption in their life (Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely, 1-7). Significant results confirm that participants in the small chances condition ($M = 2.50$) differ from those in the large chances condition ($M = 6.54$) ($F(1, 101) = 306.70, p = 0.000$) in their perceptions of whether they will experience their consumption item in their lifetime. Additional support for the manipulation found in a single-item measure of the participants’ perceived likelihood of attaining their desired item in the future being greater in the large chances condition ($M = 5.22$) than the small chances condition ($M = 3.70$) ($F(1, 101) = 34.96, p = 0.000$). Consistent with Study 3A, participants in the small chances condition view the importance of attaining their desired item in the future as less important ($M = 3.70$) than those in the large chances condition ($M = 5.22$) ($F(1, 101) = 34.96, p = 0.000$). Similarly, comparisons of general knowledge of ($F(1, 101) = 17.46, p = 0.000$) their chosen consumption item reveal significant differences between conditions, which is consistent with Study 3A findings. As well, interest level in the large chances condition ($M = 6.03$) is greater than the small chances condition ($M = 5.20$) ($F(1, 101) = 16.98, p = 0.000$), consistent with Study 3A findings.

Examining the same control measures across the conditions of accurate and inaccurate presumptions, no significant differences exist, suggesting there is no reason to believe the assignment of accurate and inaccurate is affected by any specific parameter of the study. To determine differences in the inaccurate and accurate presumptions conditions, each participant is asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 100 percent chance, how likely each of their three presumptions will occur when they experience their desired consumption item. Reviewing the ratings of each presumption reveals that significant differences exist between the inaccurate and accurate presumption condition percentage ratings. Following these ratings, participants were asked to focus on their first presumption for the duration of the study. Reviewing the ratings for this presumption reveals that those in the inaccurate condition rate their presumption as more likely to occur in the future consumption experience ($M = 86.95$) than those in the accurate presumptions condition ($M = 71.44$) ($F(1, 100) = 13.97, p = 0.000$). Control measures for both the small and large
chances condition and the accurate and inaccurate presumptions conditions are summarized in table 21 and table 22.

Table 21: Study 3C – Small Chances versus Large Chances One-Way ANOVA Control Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Small Chances</th>
<th></th>
<th>Large Chances</th>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition Check of Perceived Chances</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>306.70</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Attaining in the Future</td>
<td>2.03, 2.97</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.92, 5.51</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>34.96</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of Attaining Item in the Future</td>
<td>3.26, 4.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.92, 5.51</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>34.96</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Interest in Desired Item</td>
<td>3.99, 4.82</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>5.14, 5.74</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge of Item</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>79.51</td>
<td></td>
<td>78.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>73.21, 85.81</td>
<td>22.34</td>
<td>72.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>68.29, 82.49</td>
<td>25.06</td>
<td>65.95, 79.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>68.55, 81.95</td>
<td>23.60</td>
<td>63.09, 77.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Study 3C – Inaccurate versus Accurate Presumptions One-Way ANOVA Control Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Inaccurate Presumptions</th>
<th></th>
<th>Accurate Presumptions</th>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition Check of Perceived Chances</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Attaining in the Future</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of Attaining Item in the Future</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Interest in Desired Item</td>
<td>5.53, 6.05</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>5.24, 5.90</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge of Item</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>83.50, 90.51</td>
<td>12.78</td>
<td>64.66, 78.44</td>
<td>26.10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>0.000 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>74.39, 85.20</td>
<td>19.11</td>
<td>60.45, 76.46</td>
<td>28.98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>0.025 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Presumption Percentage Likely</td>
<td>73.66, 84.06</td>
<td>18.56</td>
<td>58.62, 74.42</td>
<td>28.06</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>0.015 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.9 Summary

This thesis provides a robust methodological assessment of whether consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences. A multi-method approach was employed to gather various types of data to offer a greater understanding of the antecedents, experiences, and outcomes of engaging in imaginative mental experiences when desired consumption is unattainable. This chapter provided a detailed overview of the purpose of each study, design and procedure of each study, participants, and analysis procedures applied to each study. The following chapter discusses the findings and results of each study in detail.
Chapter 6

Research Findings

This chapter details the findings throughout each of the studies comprising this thesis. The findings across three studies provide triangulation of evidence for the three main research questions developed through the extended conceptual framework.

6.1 Study 1: Unattainable Consumption Survey

6.1.1 Qualitative Content Analysis Findings

Reviewing open-ended text reveals financial unattainability as the most prevalent constraint limiting the attainability of desired items, consistent with findings from the exploratory interviews. When participants describe why their desired consumption item is unattainable, they often connect their sense of unattainability to the purpose of the item within the life of the individual. For example, many participants suggest that while their desired product is financially unattainable, it is also not an appropriate purchase at their current life stage (e.g., university undergraduate student) and will be more relevant at a future point in their life.

“At this stage of my life, I don't think I need it. Buying the shoes is not a priority in my life because it doesn't fit the type of lifestyle I am currently living.”
– Participant who desires Christian Louboutin Shoes

Throughout the participants’ written responses, it is also evident that while they articulate their desires are perhaps unrealistic, they are still optimistic the items will be more accessible and appropriate (i.e., financially viable) in the future. Thus, consistent with the exploratory interviews, participants maintain a sense of hope concerning their unattainable consumption items while recognizing the item is presently unattainable.
“[it is enjoyable to think about what it would be like to have my desires] … because I love cars and being able to think about owning a Land Rover gives me hope that one day my dreams could come true.” – 
*Participant who desires a Land Rover*

Several survey questions touch upon various pre-purchase touchpoints previously discussed in the marketing literature, including wish list development (Fournier and Guiry 1993), mental imagery engagement (MacInnis and Price 1990), and consumption vision development (Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995). Participants describe that they engage in various pre-purchase touchpoints consistent with the marketing literatures’ understanding of the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. For a summary of touchpoints participants engage in, please see table 23.

**Table 23: Study 1 – Unattainable Consumption Survey Pre-Consumption Touchpoint Participation Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Consumption Touchpoint</th>
<th>% of Participants Who Have Previously Engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducted online searches (e.g., Google)</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked friends for information</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researched information about related activities or items that may be more accessible at this time</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited information websites (e.g., blogs, Wikipedia)</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browsed online retailers for items (e.g., Amazon.com, thebay.com)</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed advertising material</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browsed within a shopping mall, plaza or store</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browsed social media sites for information or examples (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watched online videos (e.g., YouTube)</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to family members about desired item</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked family members for information regarding desired item</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to seeking out information relating to the features or benefits of the desired item, participants also seek out information relating to the lifestyle they would potentially have if they were to
own the desired item. Consumers seek out this additional information online, talking to friends and family members, identifying more attainable alternatives at the present time, as well as traditional window shopping or browsing activities. As consumers gain more information, they suggest their mental images become clearer and more detailed, consistent with our current understanding of the purpose of engaging in the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; MacInnis and Price 1987; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995).

“I know more about the different models and styles that the brand carries, so I have a clearer idea about what appeals to me.” – Participant who desires a Chanel Purse

Participants appear to use their stored mental imagery to inform their imaginative mental experiences, which center around the experience of using the desired item (i.e., setting, time period, place).

“Driving fast down an empty street, with the engine revving and the sky clear and blue. It doesn’t matter if I’m alone or not. Also, I imagine driving it at night through a bright city.” – Participant who desires a Ferrari LaFerrari

In many descriptions of what participants pictured in their imagination, participants describe the perceived effects they believe ownership of the item would have on themselves and their own abilities. In addition, participants describe how ownership of their desired item may change the impressions other people have of them as a result of this ownership.

“Myself wearing this beautiful custom tailored black Hugo Boss suit that makes me look like the best dressed individual in the room. People notice the way I’m dressing and it makes a differences in their minds of how they think of me.” – Participant who desires a Hugo Boss Suit

More broadly, the lifestyle participants associate with the ownership of the desired item feature heavily in the descriptions participants offer. Participants describe the lifestyle required in order to acquire the desired item as well as the lifestyle they hope to attain with ownership of the desired item in the future, relating to how consumers attempt to develop their self-concept through their interest in various desired consumption items (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967). The details participants provide relating
to why their desired item is unattainable also relate clearly to the desired self-concept they wish to express or support through their desired consumption items.

“I would like to own something from this specific category [luxury automobile] because it is the type of lifestyle that I am aiming for in the future and I also view cars as an important component of my life due to my connection with driving at an early age of 16.” – Participant who desires a Tesla Model S

Participants also describe that these experiences offer them feelings of happiness, excitement and motivation towards attaining the item in the future.

“I think it is enjoyable because it is a mental image of what I aspire to be rather than what I am now, and so it serves as a form of motivation for me that one day I will be able to get there.” – Participant who desires a Prada Purse

Overall, the qualitative findings suggest there are many reasons that contribute to why a desired consumption item is unattainable, even though they remain optimistic that consumption may become possible in the future. Participants demonstrate engagement in pre-purchase touchpoints typically associated with preparing to purchase, as well as mental imagery engagement, contributing to this research’s understanding of the imaginative mental experiences consumers create for unattainable consumption items.

6.1.2 Quantitative SEM Analysis

Employing a SEM analysis to examine the specific relationships hypothesized to exist when consumers identify unattainable consumption desires, the SEM analysis demonstrates there is a relationship between the notion of unattainability and its ability to enhance the experience of imaginative mental experiences (Est. = 0.087, p = 0.024), generating support for Hypothesis 1. This is further supported by evidence that increases in perceptions of unattainability increase the vividness of mental imagery (Est. = 0.293, p = 0.013), which enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences (Est. = 0.369, p = 0.002). The SEM analysis also provides evidence of a relationship between the perceptions consumers have relating to how the desired item may enhance their own self-concept as a way to enhance
the experience of imaginative mental experiences \((Est. = 0.559, p = 0.000)\), suggesting consumers may generally engage in imaginative mental experiences as a way to explore potential consumption desires even if they do not see an item as unattainable, supporting Hypothesis 2. Further evidence is found by evidence that increases in perceptions that the desired consumption item may enhance the self-concept increases the vividness of mental imagery \((Est. = 0.332, p = 0.021)\), which enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences \((Est. = 0.369, p = 0.002)\). Model results appear in table 24 and a path diagram is viewable in Figure 4.

Table 24: Study 1 – Unattainable Consumption Survey SEM Model Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>DV: VIVIDNESS OF IMAGERY</th>
<th>IMAGINATIVE MENTAL EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unattainability</td>
<td>0.517 (0.293) 0.013*</td>
<td>0.196 (0.087) 0.024*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Concept Enhancement</td>
<td>0.525 (0.332) 0.021*</td>
<td>0.423 (0.559) 0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vividness of Imagery</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.177 (0.369) 0.002**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Indices: \(X^2 = 0.314, DF = 17, X^2(DF) = 28, CFI = 0.985, RMSEA = 0.047, SRMR = 0.068\)

Figure 4: Unattainable Consumption Survey SEM Path Diagram
While established pre-purchase touchpoints (e.g., engaging in mental imagery, reviewing consumption visions) were included within the survey, they do not appear to fit within the model structure in a meaningful way. However, participants do provide evidence of their own engagement in various pre-purchase touchpoints, as previously suggested in the evidence shown in table 24. Consequently, this supports the notion that imaginative mental experiences involve the integration of mental imagery, prior knowledge and experiences within an immersive imaginative scenario allowing consumers the ability to explore their consumption desires without experiencing them in real life.

6.1.3 Summary

Study 1 provides evidence that builds upon the findings of the exploratory interviews and supports the conceptual development of this thesis by providing greater insights into the ways consumers approach their unattainable consumption desires. SEM model evidence for consumer engagement in imaginative mental experiences when consumption desires are unattainable is supported by the content analysis of open-ended text answers and provides a strong basis for the construction of an interview protocol to further examine the experiences of imaginative mental experiences in Study 2. Results of the SEM analysis suggest that, while consumers who find their consumption desires to be unattainable may be able to engage in imaginative mental experiences, there is support for the suggestion consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences not just unattainable consumption desires but for other reasons, chiefly, for self-concept development reasons. Findings of Study 1 informed the development of the protocol applied in Study 2 to examine the experience of imaginative mental experiences in depth.

6.2 Study 2: Critical Incident Technique Interviews

6.2.1 Overview of Findings

Interviewees who participated in the critical incident technique interviews spoke about varying consumption desires they viewed as unattainable; for a complete overview of the items discussed within
the interviews as well as other items mentioned during the opening of the interview conversations as part of their own bucket list formulation, please see table 25.

Table 25: Study 2 – Critical Incident Technique Interviews Desired Consumption Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant Age</th>
<th>Focal Item</th>
<th>Additional Bucket List Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Zenith Float Plane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Ranch/Hobby Farm</td>
<td>House, Home IT setup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Home Décor Items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education Classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Vehicle (VW/Subaru)</td>
<td>Debt repayment, house, more hours in the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>House (Toronto)</td>
<td>Dining table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Vehicle (VW/Porsche)</td>
<td>Motorcycle, house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>Car, debt repayment, house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Apple MacBook Laptop, Travel (Italy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Hike the Appalachian Trail</td>
<td>Colorado Trail, Shed, Fence, finished basement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Travel (Ireland)</td>
<td>RV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>BioMat, Fry Boots</td>
<td>House, Apple MacBook Laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Vehicle (Hybrid/Electric)</td>
<td>Travel, Marc Jacobs flats, Kate Spade purse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Cottage Property</td>
<td>SUV, debt repayment, Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Travel, paddleboard, camera equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>House (2nd), laser eye surgery, London Fog trench coat, hockey equipment, bass guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Honeymoon, House Renovations</td>
<td>New wardrobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Dodge Ram Truck</td>
<td>Stainless steel fridge, home renovations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed in Chapter 5, a qualitative content analysis was completed on transcribed data. Review of the main categories and sub-category themes within the data reveals various factors relating to the experience of imaginative mental experiences. Broadly, the data suggests there are specific background factors relevant to consumer’s desire and present situation of unattainability. Participants also
recount the details of their imaginative mental experiences and the focal elements present for them during instances of imaginative mental experiences. Consumers then offer their reflections on their imaginative mental experiences. A table of categories and sub-categories is viewable in table 26.

Table 26: Study 2 – Critical Incident Technique Interviews Category and Sub-Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Area</th>
<th>Relevant Categories and Sub-Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Unattainability</td>
<td>Perceived fit of desired item/experience with lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption would not change life; it would offer some benefit or improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption would change life; life would shift greatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption item/experience fits with life well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption leads to other habits / changes within life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons for present unattainability of desired item/experience; expressions of hope for potential attainability in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Timeline perceptions, clarity and depth of thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feeling closer when thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feeling farther when thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Current life stage / lifestyle / family constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial constraints, perceptions of financial priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-perceptions and self-other perceptions related to desired item/experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will not change who they are; will reaffirm who they already are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will change who they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption would allow others to think of them in a different way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing knowledge, facts,</td>
<td>Perceived fit of desired item/experience with lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental images</td>
<td>• Consumption would change life and it incorporate well with current life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption would change life and life would shift greatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption leads to other habits / changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background information on desired item/experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Life stage expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relates to childhood / past experiences / past interest area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relates to achievement of current need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-perceptions and self-other perceptions related to desired item/experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will not change who they are; will reaffirm who they already are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will change who they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumption would allow others to think of them in a different way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Info gathering activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has / is developing knowledge / engaging in pre-consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning via observing others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active dis-engagement with gathering information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>IME (Imaginative mental experiences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building IME from past experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feelings arising via IME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Value of engaging in IME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Actual IME descriptions / elements incorporated by person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Flexibility in IME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intended outcomes of consumption experienced or arising due to IME experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Area</td>
<td>Relevant Categories and Sub-Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>IME: Recognition that expectations and reality may not match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How does IME match reality / will it be the same or different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IME: Alternatives and trade-offs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IME can promote alternative paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• there is no alternative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewing the generated categories and sub-categories reveals several major insights relating to the overall experiences consumers have via imaginative mental experiences. Findings of the interviews suggest consumers focus their imaginative mental experiences on highly relevant consumption items that both match their own life progression as well as desired self-concept elements. As participants engage in imaginative mental experiences, they report gaining greater clarity of their desired consumption experiences, providing support for Hypothesis 3. Additionally, as participants engage in imaginative mental experiences, they report gaining increases in their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities, providing support for Hypotheses 4. Analysis of the interview categories and sub-categories reveals several major themes; each theme is now discussed below.

### 6.2.2 Unattainability as a Spectrum

Findings of the interviews suggest that how consumers view unattainability of their desired consumption items relies on their own understanding of various contextual factors, including life stage expectations and prioritization of various needs that are presently within focus. While the understanding of unattainability for each individual consumer is highly individualized, the sense that something is unattainable – whether unattainable forever or unattainable for the next few years – is consistent across participants.

“Oh, I don’t think it’s a very likely experience that will ever come to realization. But like I said you never know if a pot of gold dropped out of the sky it would be uh be nice to be able to follow it and do it. To complete it.” – Participant 1, Age 66; desires a float plane

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“I think we are hoping to do it next year... it’s low on priority in that no one goes in the master bathroom except us so it's the last thing we want to renovate... I’d rather do the kitchen first because I’m in the kitchen so much more and it’s a public space because we have people over but because [the master bathroom is] a health concern I feel like we should do it sooner. So, I think we’ll probably do it next year but we haven't set that in stone.” – Participant 17, Age 29; desires home renovations to master bathroom

Thus, while it appears the relative unattainability of a desired item is something that varies depending on the context of the individual’s situation, broadly the idea of unattainability, as it relates to specific chosen consumption desires, is understood and felt by consumers. As consumers in this study span many different life stages, income levels, and family situations (e.g., single versus partnership), how unattainability is framed is highly individualized.

“It’s certainly not easily attainable at this point in my life. Given my career and the cities that I live in it’s something that I could do if I wanted to drop all of my current life and do that. I could do it today if I really wanted to, but it’s not something that would certainly be easy and would probably have impacts on other elements of my lifestyle which might actually end up creating some other desires. If I want something I’ll go for it. If I want a trip if I want to buy a suit or if I want to go out for a good meal I’ll go do that today. But if I was to buy 100 acres [of land] and cut back my salary [to manage it] I would certainly not be able to do that [today].” – Participant 2, Age 29; desires a ranch/hobby farm

“Um one of the main things that is an issue in my brain is that I’m 27 years old, I don’t have any kids, I don’t see us as needing to be a two-car family. So that’s totally just an internalized personal assumption. Another huge, huge, huge factor is that I’m saving for a ton of other things right now that are higher on the priority list. Like a wedding, a honeymoon, and a house. Like the house will come before the car.” – Participant 16, Age 27; desires a vehicle

6.2.3 Self-Expression of Desired Consumption

Findings of the interviews suggest consumers focus their imaginative mental experiences on consumption items or experiences that both match with their own life progression (either presently, or desired in the future) as well as their desire to reflect positive self-concept elements on themselves and others around them.
“I think having your own space kind of, I don’t know, defines you as a person … I think it means that I’ve been able to be successful and whatever I have chosen to do so therefore I’m able to do something like this. Some people don’t ever get to buy a home - they rent their whole life or they do whatever. So, I think coming with [home ownership] is something like a little bit of success. Showing that you’ve succeeded at something. While there is nothing wrong with renting, and I’m sure I’ll do it eventually, I’m sure that it would be awesome to have something that is your own that you have worked hard enough to achieve.” – Participant 15, Age 22; desires home ownership

Additionally, consumers draw on many previous life experiences and memories to support and explain their chosen consumption desires.

“I would like to have a cottage because I have great memories of spending time at a cottage with my family and friends in my youth. We don’t have that space anymore and I just wanted to be able to get back into that space with family and with friends and with [my partner] and be able to enjoy that experience and actually own it myself and be able to provide that experience to other people as well.” – Participant 14, Age 27; desires a cottage property

Thus, as much as the advertising industry suggests images of wealth and luxury around many products that may enhance status and the perceptions others have of themselves, consumers focus their imaginative mental experiences on desired consumption items that are the most expressive of their conceptualization of the future life and the self they desire and view to be within their potential reach.

Yeah like my dream car would be a Porsche but something more realistic would probably be a Volkswagen Golf like that sort of seems like the kind of space that is a bit more realistic for my current financial situation… Volkswagen, specifically a Golf, represents attainable luxury to me. A Porsche is luxury no question. But it’s very elite and unattainable. … It’s super fun to imagine that I am driving down the Pacific coast highway in a Porsche and on my way to my mansion on the beach. Versus I’m going to go to Lunenburg to the salt shaker for dinner [in a Golf] … In the Porsche, I’m a very fancy and important business lady. With like Prada sunglasses and like a scarf around my neck that is blowing in the wind. And in my more modest Golf I’m just me. Doing my thing. And just, you know, hanging out.” – Participant 7, Age 31; desires a vehicle
6.2.4 Prior Knowledge and Duration of Imaginative Mental Experience Involvement

By engaging in imaginative mental experiences, consumers demonstrate they begin thinking about specific consumption desires long before actively engaging in the purchase process; for some consumers, their own time horizons span years, even decades, suggesting imaginative mental experience involvement may be a recurring pursuit over time. Consumers demonstrate they have some knowledge or seek knowledge relating to their consumption desires.

“So, we started out on the website looking at the different options and doing the comparisons because they have a great comparison chart that [Apple] let you use on their website. [my partner] is more of a guy that goes to reviews and that stuff. I’m not really like that; I’m the type of person that if I get it in my head that I want it I really don’t go by what other people say unless it’s something that I really don’t know anything about… We’ve been in to the Apple store. We’ve talked to the Apple geniuses about you know the different options and what they recommend for our type of family and that kind of thing.” – Participant 9, Age 42; desires a MacBook Laptop

“I went on Pinterest and made a little album of Ireland and the UK, but yeah, Ireland and top ten places to go and saved a few things and a few photos of what it looks like there to kind of imagine what the trip would be like, to have like, a kind of visual idea of what it might end up being. And things that people recommend seeing and doing. And maybe looked at a map to see where everything lies and how long it would take to go here and there… looked at like the cost of a flight on an airline website. Kind of figuring out how to make that actually happen like what would be the practical logistics of making it go together.” – Participant 11, Age 30; desires travel to Ireland

Whether or not consumers invest in researching and learning about their desires, imaginative mental experiences can still take place for desired consumption items. Thus, prior information or knowledge is not a requirement, but appears to be a helpful informant for generating an imaginative mental experience.

“Um no I haven’t researched anything. I could but I haven’t. I more or less have some, you know, home purchase sequence in my head of what would be the appropriate things to do and sort of sequence…. I haven’t really taken it seriously.” – Participant 2, Age 29; desires a ranch/hobby farm
Consumers also appear to use whatever knowledge and understanding they have of their consumption desires and modify or adjust as new information is gathered.

“It just I literally feel like I am boat shopping when I go down to the wharf here. I’ll pick out the ones I like, the ones I don’t like. It definitely makes me realize even more that not only do I want one, but that I do want a specific one. Again, I haven’t done a lot of research into it so I’m not sure which one I would want specifically, but I for sure over the next few years, when I start being able to pay off debt, etcetera, that will definitely be something that I will look into more. And biking by and looking at these different boats does help me zone in one what interests me.” – Participant 8, Age 30; desires a boat

6.2.5 Imaginative Mental Experiences Explore Potential Futures

Participants’ own experiences of imaginative mental experiences allow themselves to create immersive and enjoyable constructions of situations they wish to experience in the future. While the actual purchase of the item is less relevant as a feature of imaginative mental experiences, the desired benefits of consumption, who might be involved in using the item, and vivid situations of use or experience strongly feature in the imaginative mental experiences consumers create.

“Oh yeah. I picture us driving along a coast line and looking out at the water or the peaceful views. I picture us sitting on a in a little terrace café eating Gelato or the most amazing pizza we’ve had in our lives. I definitely think of things like that.” – Participant 9, Age 42; desires a trip to Italy

“I guess I picture it being really tough and really challenging. And I guess I picture, like, long trails that never end and just like beautiful views that I, you know like, can’t get over. And I perhaps can’t capture them because I’ve let my cell phone go dead! (laughter) Um yeah, so, it’d be things like that. Like deep enjoyment and appreciation and yeah.” – Participant 10, Age 31; desires hiking the Appalachian Trail

“I don’t picture it as much driving it to work and you know doing that kind of stuff; I definitely picture more the leisure activities with [a Dodge Ram Truck]. [My partner] and I taking the dog around the Cabot trail or going camping or hiking. That kind of stuff. Maybe hauling a boat or something like that right? That’s kind of the stuff I see or imagine when I see myself or myself and [my partner] in that truck versus you know driving it to work as a commuter vehicle or that kind of stuff.” – Participant 18, Age 30; desires a Dodge Ram Truck
6.2.6 Benefits and Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences

For consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences, there appears to be a number of benefits consumers may attain, which contributes a preliminary understanding to the outcomes consumers may attain from these experiences. First, fantasizing and daydreaming “feels good” and offers participants “ten minutes of joy,” offering consumers emotion-based outcomes as well as experiential-based outcomes, highlighting that the emotion-based outcomes gained through imaginative mental experiences can be rewarding enough to be enjoyable in and of itself.

“I think the thing that is most enjoyable [about imagining] is the design aspects of what would I do to a house. That’s the thing that can just give me ten minutes of joy.” – Participant 6, Age 29; desires a house in Toronto

“I like to think about it. I like to think about some different things and you know what features could it hold and that kind of thing. It’s not fun like I would get out of other activities but it’s kind of pleasant to think about different alternatives in the future.” – Participant 2, Age 29; desires a ranch/hobby farm

Second, engaging in imaginative mental experiences makes consumption seem more attainable, or perhaps more likely in the future, consistent with suggestions in the literature surrounding the role of hope in desire creation (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003).

“Yeah I think there is something fun about planning it even if it is not happening right now. You know like maybe talking about doing it makes it feel like maybe it’s less unattainable.” – Participant 10, Age 31; desires hiking the Appalachian Trail

“I enjoy fantasizing about cottage life. And being in that mode of that the pride and joy of ownership of having my own relaxing environment that [my partner] and I have created for ourselves. Fantasizing about that is enjoyment in itself. Just having conversations about, you know, what we want and what are our must haves, and things like that, just an exciting prospect of that attainable/unattainable goal right now.” – Participant 14, Age 27; desires a cottage property

Third, while consumers gain experiential outcomes that suggest consumers are able to gain a separate experience within the mind’s eye, consumers also suggest the imagination might be more exciting than the actual experience, contributing support for the involvement of various personal
presumptions that implicate individual consumer’s impressions of what might be possible with their consumption desires in the future. This is related to participant observations that reality may not be as enjoyable in comparison to what they experience through the imaginative mental experience, as the real experience may encompass details not necessarily thought of when engaging in imaginative mental experiences. This suggests consumers are able to distinguish whether or not their imagination represents something that may actually occur or not in the future.

“I think that what I imagine is a bit more exciting than what the trip would actually be. Does that make sense? …I think, oh you picture this trip going so well, so perfectly, but I imagine if we went there the reality of it would be, we’d be, you know, travelling [across] time [zones] and worrying about having places booked. Yeah, the practicality of the trip would probably get in the way of the dream of it and you know you are thinking you are not going to have a care in the world but when you get there you are still going to be worrying about things and thinking like this is not what I thought my Instagram photos would look like! (laughter) I’m not living up to what my social media would make it look like! … I think that even though, yeah, it’s vivid in my mind, it’s probably a glossier version than what it would probably end up being.” – Participant 11, Age 30; desires a trip to Ireland

“I’m only picturing like the amazing perfect parts. I’m not picturing the, like, public toilets we’ll have to use … I kind of know that I have it built up in my mind but I’m also kind of okay with it if that makes sense. This is something that I get to be really excited about so what’s the point in being nervous that I’m not going to like it or something. Like I’m sure that by the end of two weeks I’ll be really wanting my own food again and maybe my own bed but I also don’t really care. I’m going to ignore that thought.” – Participant 17, Age 29; desires a honeymoon vacation

Finally, consumers find the imaginative mental experience offers experiential-based outcomes via entertainment and exploration of various situations, suggesting consumers themselves recognize the power of the imaginative mental experience in a standalone experience of the mind.

“The daydreams of sitting and contemplating what would we do every day and the types of places we’d want to go; it definitely puts a smile on my face.” – Participant 9, Age 42; desires a trip to Italy

“No I think [imagining] is pretty frivolous. It might, like at some deeper level, motivate me or inspire me to work harder and strive [for a vehicle] but [imagining] is really not my motivating factor; it’s more entertainment value, I would say.” – Participant 16, Age 27; desires a vehicle
6.2.7 Flexibility Within Imaginative Mental Experiences

Participants also highlight that within their imaginative mental experiences, there is room for flexibility, in that what they imagine may change over time as well as being flexible about what may arise in reality – either within the desired consumption experience or whether the desired consumption will manifest as it is desired or not.

“I probably won’t splurge on a vehicle with a sunroof. And I totally imagine having a sunroof. I like the look of fancy branded vehicles, but there is probably no way. Like, I love the look of Audi. I even love the logo. Perfection. But I’m never going to buy an Audi. Probably not when I’m 75. Unless I’m like so rich that I have money to throw away, like one hundred grand on a car! Because I’m not going to buy, like, a $40,000 sedan version. I’m going to buy a sweet convertible version. In my dream when I am a multi-hundred millionaire at age 60… Probably, I chose the wrong career path. (Laughing) So I think those things are not real. Well the former is probably not real. The little hybrid sticker on the back, I don't know, it’s a significant financial investment [for that type of vehicle]. I’m sort of banking on the costs of hybrid and electric vehicles going down a fair bit in the next five years. If they are still the cost they are right now that cost would probably be prohibitive for me. And I mean if I end up with four kids it’s going to have to be something like a huge SUV or a minivan not a pretty little compact thing like I’m imagining.” – Participant 16, Age 27; desires a vehicle

“I would prefer to have a cottage than to not have a cottage, but it would not be the end of the world if I did not have one. But it is important, and given that it’s important to my fiancée as well, it puts me in a position where it is more important than if it was just something that I wanted. And so as long as, maybe, it’s not the cottage itself, but as long as I’m in a situation that can provide the same experience, or access to that experience, then maybe that’s the end goal rather than the material good.” – Participant 14, Age 27; desires a cottage property

6.2.8 Summary

The critical incident technique interviews provide insights to the experiences consumers create through imaginative mental experiences and suggest consumers can gain various outcomes from engaging in these experiences. Drawing from these findings that suggest consumers gain emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, the following section discusses three experimental designs to examine these outcomes under specific constraints related to the imaginative mental experiences. First, that perceptions of smaller or larger chances of attaining consumption desires may contribute to varying emotion-based
and experiential-based outcomes; second, that whether a desired consumption item is more self-expressive or less self-expressive of the individual may contribute to varying emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes; and third, that accurate and inaccurate presumptions consumers have about their imaginative mental experiences may contribute to varying emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes.

6.3 Study 3A: Small and Large Chances of Consumption Desires

6.3.1 Qualitative Observations

Participants were asked, by random assignment, to identify a desired item of interest they either perceive as having a small chance of attaining or a large chance of attaining in the future. Reviewing the consumption items participants focus on in this study, there are commonalities across both the small and large conditions in terms of the items and reasons for unattainability. Experiential items (e.g., trips, event tickets) and non-experiential items (e.g., watch, laptop, clothing) are present in both conditions, as are items that have a range of price tags; consistent with Study 1 and Study 2 findings, price is not the only factor limiting consumers from their desires. Thus, why someone perceives their desired item to be unattainable in either the small or large chances condition rests on the individual’s own perception of their possibility of consumption.

When asked, “when (if ever) consumption may occur,” participants in the small chances condition strongly suggest consumption “may never happen,” and their possibilities of consumption are, for some participants, limited by future cash flows or are more relevant to a future life stage. Participants in the large chances condition suggest when consumption may occur could be within the next few days, months, or years; some participants suggest timing of the product’s next model or upgrade would dictate their consumption. These answers help confirm the manipulation differences in that “when” appears, at face value, to be quite different for participants in either the small chances or large chances condition.
In examining what participants suggested as their reasons for unattainability, many commonalities are observed across both conditions: participants suggest their desired items are expensive, perhaps non-essential, and that external factors such as time constraints, knowledge and purpose of the item within their daily life are limited at the present time. These findings suggest perceptions of small or large chances therefore are specific to the individual, yet the framing of “small” and “large” chances is something individuals can easily apply to various individual consumption desires.

Participants, in their imaginative mental experience descriptions focus on the experiences they wish to have as a result of attaining their desired consumption item. For consumers in the small chances condition, it is evidence that their unattainability may affect how or what they think about with respect to their consumption desires. As one participant suggested, she keeps her desires to herself due to how unlikely they are:

“Having an extravagant wedding is something I keep to myself because of how unlikely it is. In my mind, my expectations of this include a destination wedding, about 60 friends and family surrounding my partner and I and a layered wedding dress that is elegant. I imagine a blue and white theme and extravagance in terms of the experience on a luxurious waterfront venue rather than in terms of having “expensive-looking” things. Because I would hope to pay for this myself with my partner, I would feel like I have experienced something that we deserve. I would be happy to include my friends and family in the event, and I would feel like I have many friends, unlike now. The benefits include travel, connecting with old friends, and lots of good memories with my partner.” – Small Chances Condition Participant, Desires an Extravagant Wedding

In other participants’ descriptions, focusing on their unattainable desires presents the opportunity to explore a more lavish or extravagant life that other people would notice:

“Having a Porsche sports car would entail that I live an extremely lavish lifestyle and that I am very successful at work (materialistically). In the morning, a driver would pull up in front of my door and I would get into the backseat of my car. People on the highway would turn heads when they saw the car. When I wanted to drive it myself, I could do so on the weekends. I would go to race tracks and race my cars against other rich friends who also owned nice cars. It would be a royal blue car.” – Small Chances Condition Participant, Desires a Porsche
For participants in the large chances condition, the more practical reasons for desiring the item feature prominently in their imaginative mental experiences. For a participant who desires a futon for their first apartment, they speak to the uses of the futon for friends and visitors:

“I think it would be so amazing to own a futon! I am hoping to have one as my apartment will not be too large and it will allow me to have a place for my friends to sleep while they visit me, as I will be moving to a city where I don’t know anyone! I think more so about how awesome the memories made will be, and how happy my friends will be that I have allowed them to discover this new city, rather than thinking too much about how amazing this futon itself will be. But the futon is the key feature of what allows me to achieve this goal. I have already promised a lot of people they can come visit me and stay with me so I feel that this is an effective means to achieving that.” – Large Chances Condition Participant, Desires a futon

6.3.2 Hypothesis Evidence

Two hypotheses are examined through Study 3A using one-way ANOVA tests. H5A examines whether consumers who have smaller chances of consumption gain greater emotion-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences. Support for H5A is found by comparing the small chances and large chances participant’s experience of positive and negative emotions as a result of engaging in imaginative mental experiences. Evidence shows no differences exist between the small (M = 5.11) and large chances (M = 5.03) conditions in comparing increases in positive emotions (F(1, 56) = 0.05, p = 0.826), suggesting imaginative mental experiences offer all consumers, no matter their perceptions of chances, increases in positive emotions when engaging in imaginative mental experiences. However, consumers who have smaller chances of consumption gain greater negative outcomes than consumers who have larger chances of consumption (F(1, 56) = 3.13, p = 0.082), evidenced by comparing the mean of the small chances condition (M = 2.54) with the mean of the large chances condition (M = 1.95).
H5B examines whether consumers who have smaller changes of consumption gain greater experiential-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences. Across measures of the vividness of the imaginative mental experiences ($F(1, 56) = 0.95, p = 0.333$), engagement in imaginative mental experiences ($F(1, 56) = 0.17, p = 0.686$), satisfaction with the imaginative mental experience ($F(1, 56) = 0.02, p = 0.889$) and heightened experience of desire ($F(1, 56) = 2.39, p = 0.128$), it appears that viewing unattainable consumption items from the small chances frame does not significantly increase the experiential-based outcomes consumers experience. This seems to suggest all consumers can gain increase in experiential benefits, despite their ability (or inability) to attain their desires. Summary statistics for both H6A and H6B are found in table 27.
Figure 6: Experiential-Based Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences for Small and Large Chances of Consumption

Table 27: Study 3A – Small Chances versus Large Chances One-Way ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>CFA CODE</th>
<th>Small Chances</th>
<th>Large Chances</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16.09</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 3.24, 4.02</td>
<td>CI: 4.36, 5.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>0.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI: 2.78, 3.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 3.80, 5.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Enhancement</td>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI: 3.40, 4.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 3.13, 4.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI: 5.09, 6.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 5.07, 6.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vividness of IME</td>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5B</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 4.73, 5.71</td>
<td>CI: 5.07, 6.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5B</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 5.41, 6.17</td>
<td>CI: 5.33, 6.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5B</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 4.03, 5.00</td>
<td>CI: 4.10, 5.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened Experience of Desire</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5B</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 4.91, 5.64</td>
<td>CI: 5.26, 6.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>POSITIVE</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO H5A</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 4.59, 5.63</td>
<td>CI: 4.53, 5.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>NEGATIVE</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO H5A</td>
<td></td>
<td>CI: 1.99, 3.08</td>
<td>CI: 1.54, 2.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.3 Additional Findings

Examining other measures via one-way ANOVA tests demonstrates a significant difference exists between consumers in their reporting of prior imaginative mental experience engagement ($F(1, 56) = 16.09, p = 0.000$), suggesting those who have a larger chance of consumption ($M = 4.84$) engage more than those who have a smaller chance of consumption ($M = 3.63$). Additionally, those who perceive a large chance of consumption demonstrate greater subjective knowledge of their consumption desires ($M = 4.40$) than those who perceive a small chance of consumption desire ($M = 3.34$) ($F(1, 56) = 6.54, p = 0.013$). These findings make intuitive sense, in that someone who understands consumption may be more likely to occur may have participated in other pre-consumption activities to understand their consumption desires more frequently and may already have more confidence in the knowledge about their consumption desires. Perceptions that the self-concept would be enhanced by the desired consumption item do differ significantly across conditions ($F(1, 56) = 0.38, p = 0.542$), nor do perceptions of overall life satisfaction ($F(1, 56) = 0.06, p = 0.811$).

6.3.4 Study 3A Findings Summary

As the qualitative observations suggest, small and large chances are frames through which consumers understand the possibility of consuming desired items. When salient, as in in this experiment, these frames to increase the positive emotion-based outcomes for all who are engaging in imaginative mental experiences, but, for those consumers who understand their consumption desires to have a small chance of occurring, they also experience greater negative emotion-based outcomes. Secondly, one-way ANOVA tests suggest all consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences experience increases in experiential-based outcomes. This may help explain why those who have larger chances of attaining their consumption desires are more confident in their knowledge of their consumption desires as well as why consumers who have larger chances of consumption have previously engaged more in imaginative mental experiences. Despite these differences, it is noteworthy that perceiving desired consumption items
as having a small chance of occurring does not impede the imaginative mental experience, but does have the cost of experiencing greater negative emotions.

6.4 Study 3B: Self-Expression of Consumption Desires

6.4.1 Qualitative Observations

Participants were asked, by random assignment, to identify a desired item of interest that is either self-expressive or deemed to be non-self-expressive. Reviewing the various items participants in the self-expressive condition select as the focus of their study, a range of high-profile brands and items are frequently selected. Participants across both conditions perceive that “when” they might attain their desired item ranges between very soon (e.g., “next week”) to future points in the future (e.g., “by the time I’m 30”), which suggests that much like Study 3A, there are various viewpoints on the chance of attaining unattainable consumption items, from the individual’s perspective. As to why the item it unattainable, participants typically reference the fact that they lack the appropriate finances; many also mention that their status as students is a limitation with respect to their desired item, an observation which re-confirms prior findings in Study 1 and Study 2. It is worth noting participants in the non-self-expressive condition more often suggest they do not “need” the non-self-expressive item at the present moment.

The qualitative data pertaining to the imaginative mental experience task suggest that participants focus on what the item might do for them, or how they would use the item. In the self-expressive condition, imaginative mental experience descriptions typically mention how the item relates to their self-expression goals; participants suggest the item would “make me feel unique,” or “act as sign of accomplishment and that it would represent me reaching a certain level of success.” Here, one participant speaks to how their desired consumption would achieve a sense of “making it” as an immigrant:

“Since my family first immigrated to Canada, we have never gotten the opportunity to drive in brand new luxury vehicles and always had to buy used cars. For me to buy a brand new BMW X5 SUV will be a dream come true and it is something that I have been dreaming of doing ever since I was a little kid. This will not only be a gift to myself for finally
succeeding in this country but will allow me to show my parents that all of their sacrifices were worth it and that their son has made it.” – Self-Expressive Condition Participant, Desires a BMW X5 SUV

The imaginative mental experience descriptions for non-self-expressive items do not expressly feature the self-expressive nature of consumption, yet participants do focus on the experience of use the item would provide.

“Having a toaster oven would be great. The smell of freshly baked goods would waft through my kitchen every morning as I gently lift a crisp, golden-brown bagel out of the oven. I could lather all kinds of topping on that bagel: cream cheese, guacamole, maybe even some butter. I’d expect that toaster oven to sit in the corner of my kitchen, somewhere on the counter. Over time it would become charred black from the heat and the crumbs of leftover breads. I’d have to clean it periodically to keep the debris from building up. Having a toaster oven would brighten my morning by providing me with a warm breakfast I suppose.” – Non-Self-Expressive Condition Participant, Desires a Toaster Oven

Overall, these qualitative findings are consistent with findings in Study 1 and Study 2.

6.4.2 Hypothesis Evidence

Two hypotheses are examined through Study 3B using one-way ANOVA tests. H6A examines whether consumers who focus on more self-expressive consumption desires gain greater emotion-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences than consumers who focus on non-self-expressive consumption desires. In examining support for H6A, comparing those in the self-expressive condition to those in the non-self-expressive condition, we see that those who have self-expressive consumption desires demonstrate stronger positive emotion-based outcomes (M = 5.28) than those who focus on non-self-expressive consumption desires (M = 4.63) (F(1, 60) = 4.65, p = 0.035). No significant differences exist between the self-expressive condition (M = 1.83) and the non-self-expressive condition across measures of negative emotion-based outcomes (M = 1.74) (F(1, 60) = 0.16, p = 0.688).
Figure 7: Positive and Negative Emotion-based Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences for Self-Expressive and Non-Self-Expressive Consumption Items

H6B examines whether consumers who focus on more self-expressive consumption desires gain greater experiential-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences in comparison to those who focus on non-self-expressive consumption desires. Support for H6B is found across measures that suggest participants in the self-expressive condition experience significantly greater vividness through the imaginative mental experience is ($M_{se} = 5.51; M_{nse} = 4.78$) ($F(1, 60) = 3.87, p = 0.054$), greater engagement in the imaginative mental experiences ($M_{se} = 5.49; M_{nse} = 4.71$) ($F(1, 60) = 5.92, p = 0.018$) and greater increases in the experience of as a result of the imaginative mental experience ($M_{se} = 5.55; M_{nse} = 4.91$) ($F(1, 60) = 4.28, p = 0.043$). While measures of how satisfying the experience of the imaginative mental experience does not show significant differences between the conditions, reviewing the means of both conditions demonstrates these means conform to the expectation that relative satisfaction is greater in the self-expressive condition ($M_{se} = 4.83; M_{nse} = 4.35$) ($F(1, 60) = 1.90, p = 0.173$). Summary statistics for both H6A and H6B are found in table 28.
Figure 8: Experiential-Based Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences for Self-Expressive and Non-Self-Expressive Consumption Items

![Graph showing experiential outcomes](image)

Table 28: Study 3B – Self-Expressive versus Non-Self-Expressive One-Way ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>CFA CODE</th>
<th>Non-Self-Expressive</th>
<th>Self-Expressive</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>3.08 CI: 2.52, 3.64</td>
<td>5.24 CI: 4.84, 5.64</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>3.88 CI: 3.48, 4.27</td>
<td>4.29 CI: 3.81, 4.76</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Enhancement</td>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>2.20 CI: 1.71, 3.22</td>
<td>4.15 CI: 3.65, 4.66</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>4.94 CI: 4.52, 5.36</td>
<td>4.89 CI: 4.41, 5.40</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experience</td>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>4.78 CI: 4.20, 5.36</td>
<td>5.51 CI: 5.02, 6.00</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement Satisfaction</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>4.71 CI: 4.21, 5.21</td>
<td>5.49 CI: 5.08, 5.90</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>4.35 CI: 3.80, 4.91</td>
<td>4.83 CI: 4.41, 5.25</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened Experience of Desire</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>4.91 CI: 4.38, 5.43</td>
<td>5.55 CI: 5.20, 5.91</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>4.63 CI: 4.17, 5.09</td>
<td>5.28 CI: 4.87, 5.68</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>1.74 CI: 1.37, 2.11</td>
<td>1.83 CI: 1.56, 2.10</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.3 Additional Findings

For consumers who focus on self-expressive consumption desires, a significant difference exists between conditions when examining their perceptions of prior imaginative mental experience engagement \((M_{sc} = 5.24; M_{nse} = 3.08) (F(1, 60) = 39.85, p = 0.000)\). This makes intuitive sense, in that consumers who are engaging in imaginative mental experiences are more likely to focus on something self-expressive in nature, consistent with the findings from Study 2. This is further supported by a significant difference in the degree to which participants feel their desired consumption item enhances their self-concept \((M_{sc} = 4.15; M_{nse} = 2.71) (F(1, 60) = 16.63, p = 0.000)\). There are no differences between conditions in terms of their subjective prior knowledge levels \((M_{sc} = 3.88; M_{nse} = 4.29) (F(1, 60) = 1.84, p = 0.181)\) or perceptions of overall life satisfaction \((M_{sc} = 4.94; M_{nse} = 4.89) (F(1, 60) = 0.03, p = 0.870)\).

6.4.4 Study 3B Findings Summary

As this experiment demonstrates, consumers can employ imaginative mental experiences for all kinds of different consumption items, but when consumers focus on self-expressive consumption items, they gain greater positive emotion-based outcomes and greater experiential-based outcomes. This experiment supports findings from Study 1 and Study 2 about the choices consumers make in what to focus on via the imagination – self-expressive consumption desires are something consumers demonstrate stronger previous imaginative mental experience engagement for; thus, the most powerful imaginative mental experiences are those which focus on what is self-expressive of the individual consumer.

6.5 Study 3C: Presumptions of Consumption Desires

6.5.1 Qualitative Observations

Consistent with Study 3A, Participants were first asked, by random assignment to identify a desired item of interest they either perceive as having a small chance of attaining or a large chance of attaining in the future. Examining the qualitative data for the small and large chances conditions reveals themes consistent with the qualitative data collected in Study 3A. Following the imaginative mental
experience writing task, participants were then asked, by random assignment, to recall either inaccurate presumptions or accurate presumptions that were part of their imaginative mental experience. Focusing on the qualitative entries pertaining to the inaccurate and accurate presumptions conditions, it appears that participants who identify presumptions which are inaccurate, focus on the improvements their desired consumption will make in their life, how others will perceive them as a result of their consumption, and what the features of the desired item might provide to them. For participants who identify presumptions which are accurate, there is a clear focus on the downsides or “truths” of their consumption experience, such as still experiencing delays at security even if they own a private jet or the weather being too hot and dry on a desirable vacation.

When asked for any additional thoughts after completing the presumptions writing exercise, participants in the inaccurate condition suggest they may be idealizing their desires to some degree or that they have some hesitations in the degree to which the desired item might solve a specific problem. Some participants suggest they hope the great expense of their item will be “worth it.” These findings map onto many findings from the Study 2 interviews suggesting imaginative mental experiences often involve inaccurate presumptions that may not represent reality. For participants in the accurate condition, their additional thoughts do focus on the realities of consumption – some individual focus on the fact that while the item is desirable, their desire might lessen as time passes and they will not need to pursue their desires. Others recognize their presumptions represent the hurdles they may have to overcome prior to embarking upon consumption (e.g., physical fitness), suggesting that these participants have been prompted to think about the realities of consumption in a salient way. Overall, reflecting on their presumptions seems to highlight to all participants that there are potential gaps in their understanding of what might be possible through consumption.

### 6.5.2 Hypothesis Evidence

Three hypotheses are examined through Study 3C using two-way and one-way ANOVA tests. As two different conditions were present, two-way ANOVA tests examined whether there were any
interaction effects between the two conditions. As no pertinent interactions were demonstrated, no two-way results are reported here. To examine the proposed hypotheses, one-way ANOVA tests specific to the condition of interest were performed. H7A examines whether consumers who have accurate presumptions regarding their imaginative mental experiences gain greater emotion-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences. Findings from the experiment suggest no significant differences exist across measures of either positive emotion-based outcomes ($M_{inacc} = 5.28; M_{acc} = 5.62$) ($F(1, 101) = 1.946, p = 0.898$) or negative emotion-based outcomes ($M_{inacc} = 1.78; M_{acc} = 1.76$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.01, p = 0.909$) (H7A).

**Figure 9: Emotion-Based Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences for Inaccurate and Accurate Presumptions**

The second hypothesis, H7B examines whether consumers who have accurate presumptions regarding their imaginative mental experiences gain greater experiential-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences. Partial support for this hypothesis is found in comparing those in the accurate presumptions condition with those in the inaccurate presumptions condition on measures of vividness of the imaginative mental experience ($M_{inacc} = 5.89; M_{acc} = 5.48$) ($F(1, 101) = 3.29, p = 0.073$). As the results suggest, those in the inaccurate condition experience greater some experiential-based
outcomes. It is possible these consumers find exploring imaginative mental experiences that are not reflective of reality find this to allow them a more engaging experience overall. Measures of imaginative mental experience engagement \((M_{\text{inacc}} = 5.92; M_{\text{acc}} = 5.94)\) \((F(1, 101) = 0.01, p = 0.898)\), satisfaction with the imaginative mental experience \((M_{\text{inacc}} = 4.94; M_{\text{acc}} = 4.96)\) \((F(1, 101) = 0.01, p = 0.919)\) and heightened experiences of desire \((M_{\text{inacc}} = 4.90; M_{\text{acc}} = 4.76)\) \((F(1, 101) = 0.20, p = 0.653)\) do not have significant differences in comparing the inaccurate and accurate presumptions conditions.

**Figure 10: Experiential-Based Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences for Inaccurate and Accurate Presumptions**

H7C examines whether the beliefs and feelings associated with the recognition of their presumptions of the imaginative mental experience are greater for those consumers who have accurate presumptions regarding their imaginative mental experiences. Evidence shows that for consumers who were asked to reflect on the presumptions that were accurate within their imaginative mental experience, they have significantly weaker impressions of whether their presumptions are accurate and believable compared with participants who were asked to reflect on presumptions they recognized were inaccurate within their imaginative mental experience \((M_{\text{acc}} = 3.77; M_{\text{inacc}} = 4.26)\) \((F(1, 101) = 8.74, p = 0.004)\), which is the opposite of what was expected. In examining the feelings participants have towards their
presumptions, no significant differences between the inaccurate and accurate conditions exist ($M_{acc} = 4.23$; $M_{inacc} = 4.39$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.887$, $p = 0.349$). Summary statistics for H7A, H7B, and H7C are found in Table 29.

Table 29: Study 3C – Inaccurate versus Accurate Presumptions One-Way ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>CFA CODES</th>
<th>Inaccurate Presumptions</th>
<th>Accurate Presumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior</td>
<td>CFA CODES</td>
<td>Mean (SD, CI)</td>
<td>Mean (SD, CI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>5.56 (0.99, 5.27, 5.84)</td>
<td>5.17 (1.24, 4.83, 5.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>SPK</td>
<td>4.67 (1.51, 4.24, 5.10)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.39, 4.15, 4.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Enhancement</td>
<td>SELFCON</td>
<td>4.56 (1.62, 4.10, 5.03)</td>
<td>4.43 (1.74, 3.96, 4.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>LIFESAT</td>
<td>5.17 (1.20, 4.82, 5.51)</td>
<td>5.34 (1.05, 5.06, 5.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experience</td>
<td>VIVIDIME</td>
<td>5.89 (1.06, 5.58, 6.19)</td>
<td>5.48 (1.18, 5.16, 5.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>IMEENG</td>
<td>5.92 (1.10, 5.60, 6.23)</td>
<td>5.94 (0.93, 5.69, 6.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>IMESAT</td>
<td>4.94 (1.16, 4.61, 5.27)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.19, 4.64, 5.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened Experience of Desire</td>
<td>DESIRE</td>
<td>4.90 (1.54, 4.46, 5.35)</td>
<td>4.76 (1.59, 4.33, 5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>POSITIVE EMO</td>
<td>5.28 (1.35, 4.89, 5.67)</td>
<td>5.62 (1.11, 5.31, 5.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO</td>
<td>1.78 (1.08, 1.47, 2.10)</td>
<td>1.76 (1.01, 1.49, 2.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presumptions Beliefs</td>
<td>PREBELIEF</td>
<td>4.26 (0.65, 4.07, 4.44)</td>
<td>3.77 (0.96, 3.50, 4.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presumptions Feelings</td>
<td>PREFEEL</td>
<td>4.39 (0.84, 4.15, 4.64)</td>
<td>4.23 (0.94, 3.97, 4.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this experiment employed the small and large chances manipulation as a way for participants to identify a consumption desire of interest, there are no interaction effects evidenced within this experiment between the chances condition and the presumption condition and therefore no two-way interaction results are reported.
6.5.3 Additional Findings

In examining the results of the small and large chances manipulation, there is additional evidence to support H5A, consistent with Study 3A, in that the small chances participants have significantly stronger negative emotion-based outcomes ($M_{sm} = 2.10; M_{lg} = 1.53$) ($F(1, 101) = 8.23, p = 0.005$).

Additional evidence to contradict H5B, which is not supported in Study 3, is also present across measures of the vividness of the imaginative mental experience ($M_{sm} = 5.28; M_{lg} = 5.97$) ($F(1, 101) = 10.29, p = 0.002$) and the heightening the experience of desire ($M_{sm} = 4.51; M_{lg} = 5.07$) ($F(1, 101) = 3.37, p = 0.069$).

In both cases, the stronger outcomes are present for participants in the large chances condition, suggesting the experience of the imaginative mental experiences can be more vivid and heighten the experience of desire when consumption is thought to have a greater chance of occurring. Results are viewable in table 30.

Consistent with Study 3A, measures of prior imaginative mental experience engagement are stronger for those in the large chances condition ($M_{sm} = 5.00; M_{lg} = 5.61$) ($F(1, 101) = 7.74, p = 0.006$) as are the perceptions of knowledge pertaining to the desired item ($M_{sm} = 3.83; M_{lg} = 5.17$) ($F(1, 101) =
However, perceptions that the desired item would enhance the self-concept do not differ significantly across the small and large conditions ($M_{sm} = 4.37; M_{lg} = 4.58$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.42, p = 0.519$), nor do measures of life satisfaction ($M_{sm} = 5.32; M_{lg} = 5.21$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.24, p = 0.624$).

Reviewing additional measures across the inaccurate and accurate presumptions conditions reveals that measures of prior imaginative mental experience engagement are stronger for those in the inaccurate condition ($M_{acc} = 5.17; M_{inacc} = 5.56$) ($F(1, 101) = 3.05, p = 0.084$). However, no significant differences exist across conditions on measures of subjective prior knowledge ($M_{acc} = 4.53; M_{inacc} = 4.67$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.23, p = 0.624$), or life satisfaction ($M_{acc} = 5.34; M_{inacc} = 5.17$) ($F(1, 101) = 0.63, p = 0.428$).

Table 30: Study 3C – Small versus Large Chances One-Way ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>CFA CODES</th>
<th>Small Chances Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Large Chances Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>SPIME</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>0.006 ***</td>
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<td>Subjective Prior Knowledge</td>
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<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>-  ***</td>
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<td>Self-Concept Enhancement</td>
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<td>3.84</td>
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<td>4.49</td>
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<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.624</td>
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<td>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>VIVIDIME H5B</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>0.002 ***</td>
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<td>101</td>
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<td>IMESAT H5B</td>
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<td>1.23</td>
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<td>1.12</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<td>1.65</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.37</td>
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<td>POSITIVE EMO H5A</td>
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<td>1.07</td>
<td>101</td>
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<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>NEGATIVE EMO H5A</td>
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<td>1.19</td>
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<td>0.84</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td>0.005 **</td>
</tr>
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<td>PREBELIEF</td>
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<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>101</td>
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<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.813</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6.5.4 Study 3C Summary

The findings of this study suggest consumers who are prompted to reflect on the inaccurate presumptions that are part of their imaginative mental experiences may experience stronger positive feelings relating to their presumptions, even if their presumptions do not match what may occur in reality. Additionally, it appears focusing on inaccurate presumptions offer greater engagement in imaginative mental experiences. While there are no interaction effects present between the small and large chances condition and the inaccurate and accurate presumptions condition, this study provides additional support for H5A and initial support for H5B through the replication of the small and large chances manipulation. This experiment confirms consumers can have a range of presumptions present in their imaginative mental experience, and even if they do not match with reality, consumers can gain some experiential and positive feelings from these experiences. Interestingly, focusing on what is inaccurate and likely not going to occur in reality creates greater beliefs in their presumptions for consumers, suggesting that when consumers are prompted to think about the discrepancies between their imagination and what may occur in reality, rather than the similarities, this appears to heighten the experiences consumers recall regarding their imaginative mental experiences.

6.6 Summary of Research Findings

Across three studies, evidence for the connection between perceptions of unattainability and engaging in imaginative mental experiences demonstrates imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the ability to create an alternative consumer journey. Consumers who recognize their consumption desires as unattainable can engage in imaginative behaviors that allow them to integrate prior understandings within an imaginative scenario of future experience to gain a meaningful and rewarding experience of the imagination. Data presented here explores two antecedents of imaginative mental experiences, the experiences of the imaginative mental experiences and three situations affecting subsequent outcomes arising from these experiences.
Study 1 (unattainable consumption survey) establishes that when consumers identify unattainable consumption desires, these perceptions may enhance the experience of imaginative mental experiences. Further, this study provides evidence that when desired items are perceived to enhance the self-concept, consumers may also increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences. In either case, each of these perceptions also increase the vividness of existing imagery, which in turn enhance the experience of imaginative mental experiences.

Study 2 (critical incident technique interviews) further explores the actual experiences of imaginative mental experiences through critical incident technique interviews, and findings suggest there are many facets to these highly individual experiences. Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers a way to explore immersive explorations of experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. Findings suggest consumers engage with their desires long before consumption may even be possible. Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers a greater understanding of their desired consumption experiences as well as the ability to distinguish what may or may not be possible via consumption. Several findings of the interviews reveal potential emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes as a result of engaging in imaginative mental experiences which were further explored in Study 3.

Study 3 (experimental designs) provides evidence of the relative strength of emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes across various factors that influence the imaginative mental experience. Study 3A explores how viewing consumption desires through the lenses of small and large chances of attainment strengthens emotion-based outcomes, with stronger negative emotions emerging for those consumers in the small chances condition. While all participants experience increases in experiential-based outcomes and positive emotion-based outcomes, those who have the smallest chances of consumption are the ones who experience the greater negative emotion-based outcome. This indicates that while imaginative mental experiences are a rewarding experience generally, they do also highlight to consumers the downsides of being unable to consume desired items at this time.
Study 3B examined how consumption desires relate to self-expression desires. When consumption desires are more self-expressive in nature, consumers gain greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes. This shows that while many items may be desired by consumers, those items which are self-expressive offer consumers the greatest benefit when engaging in imaginative mental experiences. Study 3C examined the presumptions consumers create about their potential experiences with desired consumption through imaginative mental experiences. As evidenced in the Study 2 interview findings, consumers often recognize their imaginative mental experience may not accurately reflect reality; results of Study 3C suggest consumers who are prompted to focus on the inaccurate presumptions they create gain greater vividness of the imaginative mental experience and greater positive feelings relating to the presumptions despite recognizing their presumptions are further from the actual reality they may experience. This supports the findings from Study 2 that suggest that while the imagination does not have to reflect reality, it can be more enjoyable to focus on what may not actually occur in reality.

Taken together, these three studies provide evidence for the phenomena of imaginative mental experience engagement when consumers find their consumption desires to be unattainable. The imaginative mental experiences consumers create when consumption desires are unattainable offer consumers an alternative consumer journey, allowing them to gain specific emotion-based and experiential-based benefits and outcomes, even though they are not engaging in consumption at this time. A summary of which hypotheses are supported via the research findings is viewable in Table 31.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1  When consumers perceive consumption items as unattainable, they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Study 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2  When consumers perceive consumption items a way to enhance their self-concept they experience increases in the vividness of their existing imagery, which enhances their experience of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Study 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3  When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase how clear their desired future consumption experiences are in their mind’s eye.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Study 2</td>
</tr>
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<td>H4  When consumers increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences, they increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Study 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>H5A As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3A, 3C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5B As a consumer’s perceived chances of consumption decrease, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6A As a consumer’s desire increases in self-expressiveness, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3B</td>
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<tr>
<td>H6B As a consumer’s desire increases in self-expressiveness, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7A As a consumer’s presumptions increase in accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Study 3C</td>
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<tr>
<td>H7B As a consumer’s presumptions increase in accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in experiential-based outcomes of imaginative mental experiences.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7C As a consumer’s presumptions increase in perceived accuracy, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in the strength of beliefs and feelings towards their presumptions.</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Study 3C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7

Discussion

This thesis integrates prior literature to conceptualize imaginative mental experiences as the phenomena which allows consumers to “experience” an alternative consumer journey via their imagination, specifically when consumption is viewed as unattainable. Presently, the marketing discipline does not have a robust understanding of what occurs when consumers spend time thinking about consumption items they cannot and will not go out and purchase today, even though they wish to do so. Prior literature assumes consumers who would like to buy something engage in productive consumer journeys, which involve progressing through each stage of the journey to satisfy their consumption desires without considering what happens when desired consumption is viewed as unattainable. While prior literature does examine many relevant aspects of consumption, including pre-purchase touchpoints (MacInnis and Price 1990; Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995), customer journeys (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), experiential consumption (Carù and Cova 2003; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003), and possible consumption outcomes (Oliver 1993, 1999), the marketing literature does not integrate these understandings within the framework of consumption and consumer journey to address the ways consumers balance and manage ongoing yet unpursued desires. The marketing literature does, however, recognize consumers maintain a range of desires at any point in time, as demonstrated by work on nonconsumption (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990; Dai and Fishbach 2014; Stammerjohan and Webster 2002), wish list creation (Fournier and Guiry 1993) and McCracken’s (1988) theory of displaced meaning; all ideas supporting this thesis’s theoretical integration which suggests consumers do, in fact, encounter consumption desires that are presently viewed as unattainable.

As not all desired consumption items are realistically attainable for all consumers, this thesis explored whether imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to experience their desired consumption items when consumers recognize desired consumptions item as unattainable for the foreseeable future via alternative consumer journeys.
This thesis also integrates prior understandings of fantasy creation, daydreaming and savoring to conceptualize imaginative mental experiences as a pre-purchase touchpoint that allows consumers to integrate prior knowledge and experience within an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have as a result of attaining their consumption desires. The marketing discipline does not fully explore how consumers interact with the imagination, even though the imagination is recognized as an activity all individuals engage in for many purposes on a daily basis (Schau 1999; Zaltman 2016). Within this thesis, the focus narrows to the pre-purchase stage of the journey to help shed light on the ways in which consumers employ imagination when consumption desires are viewed as unattainable. In doing so, this thesis uncovers evidence that consumers can create “alternative consumer journeys” via the imaginative mental experiences. While these consumers are oriented within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey, they are enacting a consumer experience separate and distinct from simply preparing to engage in other consumption experiences. Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences for their unattainable desired consumption item imaginatively explore their desired experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires, gaining increases in experiential-based and emotion-based outcomes through these experiences without having engaged in a traditional consumer journey.

In exploring these ideas, three research questions guided the focus of this research: first, when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? Second, when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? And third, through engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is unattainable, what outcomes do consumers gain?

To explore these questions, the initial conceptual development examines the premise that consumers who find their consumption desires to be unattainable develop imaginative mental experiences which afford them an alternative consumer journey, a consumer journey that exists solely within the mind of the consumer. As well, the extended conceptual framework suggests imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to integrate prior knowledge and experience within an immersive exploration of the
experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. Through the presented conceptual framework, this thesis offers an integrated understanding of the many pre-purchase touchpoints that allow consumers to develop knowledge and experience that may be incorporated within an imaginative mental experience – including mental imagery, consumption visions, consumption dreams and wish list creation – offering a more nuanced understanding of the consumer’s experience with unattainable desired consumption items within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. The pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey is generally thought to encompass all actions consumers take prior to engaging in consumption transactions, but findings from this research demonstrate consumers who have unattainable consumption desires can create entire consumption experiences through their imagination without participating in the other progressive stages of the consumer journey. Presently, our understanding of consumer journeys does not encompass imaginative mental experiences or the possibilities that a consumer’s interaction with the imagination may offer increased emotion-based or experiential-based outcomes, even though they are not engaging in consumption transactions at this time.

To address the suggested research questions and develop support for the extended conceptual framework, several data collection and analysis methods were explored. First, exploratory interviews suggest a connection between the focus consumers have on presently unattainable consumption items and how they use their imagination to explore what those consumption items may be like if they are to become attainable in the future. Following from this, three studies were completed: first, an unattainable consumption survey; second, critical incident technique interviews; and third, three scenario-based experimental designs. The remainder of this chapter proceeds with an overview of the key findings, including a discussion of each research question addressed in this research, followed by a discussion of the key theoretical and managerial contributions emerging across the cumulative analysis. Following this, limitations and future research opportunities arising from this thesis are discussed.
7.1 Key Findings

Three studies provide evidence that consumers who indicate their consumption desires are unattainable engage in imaginative mental experiences that allow consumers to integrate prior knowledge and experience within an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have as a result of attaining their consumption desires. Further, these imaginative mental experiences provide consumers who experience specific circumstances with increases in emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes.

In reviewing the literature of consumer journeys, there is an absence of understanding as to what occurs when consumers who feel their desired consumption items are unattainable. The literature does focus on how consumers who have desires engage in various pre-purchase touchpoints to prepare for the consumption transaction (Fournier and Guiry 1993; MacInnis and Price 1990; Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995) to then proceed through each successive stage of the consumer journey. In contrast, this thesis’s findings suggest consumers who feel their consumption desires are unattainable engage in imaginative mental experiences to create an alternative consumer journey. Additionally, as consumers recognize their consumption desires as unattainable, consumers understand they are not preparing for purchase, but rather enjoying the mental state created through imaginative mental experiences as they presently are unable to have the actual experience. This suggests consumers are both interested in and capable of using their imagination to explore potential consumption experiences, whether they are confident they may actually attain their desired consumption items, an arguably important aspect of consumption not presently accounted for in the literature. Evidence derived from Study 1 (unattainable consumption survey) shows the experiences of imaginative mental experiences are enhanced or strengthened when vivid imagery is employed as part of the imaginative mental experience. Additionally, an important connection between perceptions that the consumer’s self-concept is enhanced by their unattainable consumption item and imaginative mental experience engagement is demonstrated, suggesting the specific items that become the focus of imaginative mental experiences are deemed to be important to the individual’s desired conceptualization of self.
The insights of Study 1, coupled with the insights developed through Study 2 (critical incident technique interviews), suggest imaginative mental experiences offer powerful experiences that consumers regularly encounter when desired consumption items are highly self-expressive and presently unattainable. Of note is the fact that consumers acknowledge their desired consumption items involve a long time-horizon; this is shown both in how long consumers report having been thinking about their desired item – for some consumers this equates to many months or even years – and, how long they expect to continue exploring their desires through the imagination (prior to potential attainment), which, for some consumers, may amount to many months or years in the future. Consumers therefore find value in continually thinking about specific desired consumption possibilities over a long-time horizon, an understanding of consumers and their desires that has not been previously considered in the literature. Consumers appear to juggle many desires at one time – both the desires they can actively pursue and those they cannot – and consumers are likely engaging in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable desires on an ongoing basis.

Study 2 findings suggest imaginative mental experiences may not relate to any of the consumers’ present day consumption concerns as many items consumers think about are not relevant to their present daily life, but their imaginative mental experiences likely have the potential to impact ongoing consumption decision-making. For example, someone might think about a desired trip to Ireland, and while they have no plane tickets booked, upon their next trip to a bookstore might end up buying an Ireland travel guide to continue to fuel their imaginative mental experience. While it might seem counter-intuitive for individuals to spend time imagining a desired consumption experience that the consumers themselves recognize may never materialize, consumers commonly acknowledge that while they understand the “impossibility” of their desires, they are hopeful some relevant factors (e.g., affordability, present financial situation) may change in the future, thereby allowing consumption to take place. Feelings or expressions of hope as they relate to desire creation and maintenance are consistent with the marketing literature’s understanding of desire creation (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003); consumers’
understanding of their own chances of attainment vary person to person, but feelings of hopefulness for the possibility of consumption are demonstrably universal.

Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences draw on existing knowledge to enhance the experiences, but, as findings from Study 2 suggest, a low level of knowledge about the desired consumption item does not necessarily impede imaginative mental experience engagement. These consumers have no trouble filling “blank spaces” through their imagination (Zaltman 2016) in order to explore their desired consumption experiences. These experiences offer consumers the ability to explore many potential futures as their understanding of what may be possible is flexible and malleable. And, as Study 2 findings suggest, consumers may be engaging in imaginative mental experiences on a recurring basis over long time horizons, an observation that may help marketers better understand the length of the “desire” stage of consumption for many consumers.

The imaginative mental experiences consumers develop for unattainable desired consumption items offer consumers who perceive consumption as unattainable the ability to create an alternative consumer journey. These findings suggest when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences to create alternative consumer journeys, consumers gain emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, supporting this research’s suggestion that consumers benefit from the experiences of the imagination, even when they are not engaging in a traditional consumer journey.

Consumers who engage in alternative consumer journeys for unattainable consumption desires are bound to the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. Finding of Study 3 (experimental designs) suggest consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences generally experience increases in experiential-based and emotion-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences. More specifically, when consumers focus on self-expressive consumption items, consumers gain stronger emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes from the imaginative mental experiences than focusing on a non-self-expressive, yet desired, consumption item. When consumers were asked to create an imaginative mental experience for something of their own choosing, rather than for a suggested (and verified as non-self-expressive) item, these consumers gained significantly stronger positive emotion-
based and experiential-based outcomes following the imaginative mental experience exercise. Thus, choosing to engage in an imaginative mental experience for something that reflects the individual reaps greater rewards for the individual than choosing to engage in an imaginative mental experience for something the individual would never consider an expression of who they are or who they wish to be.

While all consumers gain increases in positive experiential-based and emotion-based outcomes through imaginative mental experiences, results of Study 3 also suggest those consumers who have smaller chances of ever attaining their consumption desires gain significantly stronger negative emotion-based outcomes from imaginative mental experiences. This demonstrates there is a caveat to the creation and engagement of imaginative mental experiences – when consumers feel their consumption desires are unlikely to ever materialize, the imaginative mental experience allows both upsides and downsides to consumers, much the way actual consumption offers upsides and downsides to consumers. This is not necessarily a bad thing for consumers, but a reminder that the benefits of the imagination can be accompanied by the cost of recognizing more clearly the potential impossibility of their desires. In contrast, for consumers who feel consumption is attainable in the future, their negative emotion-based outcomes are tempered, likely because they are within “reach” of their consumption desires and not achieving their desires is not a focal element of their imaginative mental experience. These findings are a confirmation of Study 2 findings which found consumers suggest their imagination allows them to experience both the highs of what they believe might be possible while also reminding consumers of the potential lows, either by exploring those negatives in the imagination or realizing that what might happen in reality might not reflect their imagination.

When consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences they often presume certain things to be possible via the imagination. As well, as consumers develop an imaginative mental experience, they may create various presumptions relating to what is possible through actual consumption experiences. When consumers reflect upon their presumptions they may identify either accurate or inaccurate presumptions, and Study 2 findings suggest consumers gain vary outcomes, depending on whether they focus on inaccurate or accurate presumptions. Findings of Study 3 suggest that when consumers are
prompted to focus on the inaccurate presumptions that they create through their imaginative mental experiences, consumers gain greater positive feelings relating to their presumptions than those consumers who are prompted to focus on the accurate presumptions they create through their imaginative mental experiences. This suggests that while the imagination does not have to reflect reality, it may be more enjoyable to focus on what may not actually occur in reality, highlighting how imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the ability to create immersive alternative consumer journeys.

Together, these findings suggest imaginative mental experiences offer consumers who perceive consumption as unattainable the opportunity to create alternative consumer journeys. Consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable desired consumption items are able to gain increases in emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes through their creation of a reprieve from daily life by exploring a consumption scenario of their own design within the mind’s eye. The uplifting nature of these experiences are recognized openly by consumers, who describe these experiences as offering “ten minutes of joy” and that by engaging in imaginative mental experiences it’s “pleasant to think about different alternatives,” even when consumers are not entirely sure their consumption desires will manifest. Through the imaginative mental experiences, consumers increase their perceived understanding of consumption and the experiences they wish to attain in the future. Thus, beyond the increases in emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, Study 2 (critical incident technique interviews) findings suggest consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences gain a greater understanding of their consumption desires. This increase in “understanding” varies consumer to consumer, but allows consumers to better understand such things as their set of options, choices, features, styles, experiential expectations, and perceptions of others of their consumption, to name a few. It appears the process of engaging in the imagination acts as both an exploratory tool and a complex independent “alternative” consumption experience at the same time. While traditional consumption for a desired item may only occur once, the imaginative mental experience offers a potentially recurring and continually changing and adapting experience of the imagination, allowing a consumer a more clear and distinct understanding of what may or may not be possible in the future.
Within this thesis, three research questions were central to the data collection and analysis. First, when consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences? Second, when consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who engage in alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences? Third, through engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is unattainable, what outcomes do consumers gain? In the sections below, each research question and relevant findings are further discussed.

7.1.1 Research Question 1: When consumers explore desired consumption via imaginative mental experiences, what factors influence their engagement in imaginative mental experiences?

This dissertation addresses the first research question through a survey method approach. The survey method was chosen for its ability to explore a variety of possible factors influencing engagement in imaginative mental experiences. The survey examined individual cases of unattainability across scale-based questions and short-answer questions, which provide information relating to individual’s own experiences dealing with unattainable consumption desires. The survey builds upon the exploratory interviews completed during the conceptual development phase of the research by gathering a broad range of consumer insights which directed more fine-grained approaches in examining this question, as well as the subsequent research questions.

Evidence derived from Study 1 shows that when consumers find their consumption desires to be unattainable, this allows for increases in the vividness of their mental images, which in turn enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences (H1). As well, when consumers find their consumption desires to enhance their self-concept, this also allows for increases in the vividness of their mental images, which in turn enhances the experience of imaginative mental experiences (H2). Open-ended responses of short-answer questions, examined through content analyses procedures, suggest consumers who find their consumption desires to be unattainable are not just limited by financial constraints; consumers experience many influences on their perceptions of unattainability, including family dynamics, time constraints and
physical (e.g., age or ability) restrictions. The theoretical development of this thesis suggests consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences are otherwise within the pre-purchase stage of the consumer journey. Reflecting this, many possible pre-purchase touchpoints were examined through this survey, yet structural equations model results do not suggest any of these pre-purchase touchpoints are, alone, enough to encourage consumers to engage in imaginative mental experiences, even though they may provide consumers with knowledge and experience to draw upon in their imaginative mental experiences. These pre-purchase touchpoints are, while not present in the resulting model, important activities consumers do engage in when their consumption items are deemed unattainable as content analysis suggests, further contributing support to the integrated conceptual development of this thesis.

Lastly, evidence from Study 1 demonstrates that while consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences relating to consumption desires that are unattainable, there is also evidence that when consumers feel a desired consumption item may enhance their self-concept, they also experience enhancements in their experience of their imaginative mental experiences. This understanding of consumer’s desires suggests engaging in imaginative mental experience is not necessarily limited to situations of unattainability, suggesting the imagination is relevant to consumers and their desires in a multitude of ways. Consumers have long been thought to engage in consumption for the purposes of self-concept development (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Landon Jr 1974) and this shows that imaginative mental experiences likely plays an important role in understanding desired consumption which consumers feel will enhance their self-concept. This finding also demonstrates consumers may employ imaginative mental experiences as a touchpoint within various stages of the consumer journey, in order to enhance and develop an understanding of their consumption desires. Seeing that imaginative mental experiences are relevant to consumers both when consumption is unattainable and when their desired consumption items are expressive of their desired self-concept motivation suggests there is an opportunity to better understand the variety of circumstances under which consumers may engage in imaginative mental experiences, especially as their imaginative mental experiences may implicate other consumption behaviors.
7.1.2 Research Question 2: When consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences, what are the experiences of consumers who create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences?

This thesis addresses the second research question by completing a series of qualitative critical incident technique (CIT) interviews. This approach allowed for systematic collection of participants own self-reported experiences with imaginative mental experiences for unattainable consumption desires and the CIT method is a fitting approach here as participants reported their own memories about past imaginative mental experiences.

The data gathered in Study 2 suggests that as consumers increase their engagement with imaginative mental experiences, they gain increases in the clarity of their desired future consumption experiences (H3). This means that as consumers continue to engage with their imaginative mental experiences their understanding of their consumption desires improves and becomes clearer to them over time. As well, the data gathered in Study 2 suggests that as consumers increase their engagement with imaginative mental experiences, they increase their ability to distinguish whether their imagination represents potential realities or not (H4). This also suggests consumers use their imaginative mental experiences to both explore various scenarios of what might be possible, reflecting throughout the experience as to how “realistic” their imaginative mental experience may be. Findings from Study 2 also uncover that what “unattainable” means to consumers varies across a spectrum – all the way from “it’s never ever gonna happen” to “it’s absolutely going to happen, just not right now,” depending on the individual consumer and the factors that are part of their understanding of unattainability. Evidence from the interviews also provides mounting support for the notion that desired consumption items are typically self-expressive in nature, helping to bolster the findings related to the first research question.

Additional findings of Study 2 uncover that knowledge levels of individual consumers play a role in shaping the imaginative mental experience and that imaginative mental experiences allow consumers the ability to explore various potential futures. The imaginative mental experience allows for the
exploration of various situations of use, various possible reactions from friends and family, and various feelings based on the created scenarios; ultimately, the imagination allows for endless variations of the desired imaginative experience. Finally, the findings of the critical incident technique interview suggest there are benefits and increases in both emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes for consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences, even though they are not engaging in consumption at this time. This finding builds on evidence from the unattainable consumption survey suggesting consumers do find the experiences imaginative mental experiences enjoyable, and provides a basis for the further exploration of these benefits in examination of the third research question.

While all consumers involved in this research – across all studies – suggest they perceive their desires as unattainable, there is also a consistent expression of hope for attainment at some forward point in time that is very clearly expressed by interview participants. This is consistent with the literature’s understanding of desires and hope, which suggests that without hope, desires are no longer relevant and would not be a continual focus of a consumer (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). It is possible the feelings of hope allow consumers to continually aspire to their consumption desires relate to or are influenced by how people think about potential future events. Applying construal level theory (Liberman and Trope 1998; Trope and Liberman 2003; Wakslak et al. 2006) to consumers’ feelings of hope, it is possible consumers have a more optimistic outlook on their consumption possibilities due to construal of psychological distance. Research suggests understandings of hypothetical futures may be more abstract if the psychological distance is perceived as greater (Armor and Sackett 2006), and for consumers who feel their consumption desires will be unattainable for a very long time, their feelings of hope are intertwined with their sense of optimism. Thus, construal level theory may help explain why consumers often have positive outlooks on consumption possibilities that are far away in the future. However, construal theory’s understanding of psychological distance does not necessarily capture consumers’ own ability to recognize the potential downfalls or limitations of their imaginative mental experiences, of which many interview participants noted in their conversations. Taken together, consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences appear to be engaging in a standalone consumption experience, an alternative consumer
journey, which allows them to experience their desired consumption via imagination. This understanding of consumer’s interaction with imagination provides an updated understanding of how consumers interact with their desires, specifically those that are unattainable. These experiences truly offer consumers an “experience” that is felt and experienced through the imagination, offering consumers the opportunity to develop their understanding of their desires as well as a sense of what might be possible if they are to attain their consumption desires in the future.

7.1.3 Research Question 3: Through engaging in imaginative mental experiences when consumption is unattainable, what outcomes do consumers gain?

This thesis addresses the third and final research question through three scenario-based experimental designs. In examining this research question, two specific types of outcomes become the focus of the experiments which comprise Study 3: emotion-based outcomes and experiential-based outcomes. These specific outcomes are important, as imaginative mental experiences are sensory in nature and understanding the effects of imaginative mental experience generation on consumer’s thoughts and feelings as well as their perceptions as to the “experience” of the imagination can help to understand the strength of consumers’ alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences.

Experimental methods were chosen to compare conditions and clearly understand the impact of various independent variables on the suggested outcomes derived by engaging in imaginative mental experiences.

Study 3A examined whether consumers who believe they have a small chance of attaining their desired consumption gain greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes from imaginative mental experiences than consumers who believe they have a large chance of attaining their desired consumption items. Evidence shows that consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in positive emotion-based outcomes and despite their perceived chances of attaining consumption. However, when consumers perceive there to be a small chance of attaining their consumption desires, these consumers gain significantly greater negative emotion-based outcomes, generating partial support for H5A. It is also clear that consumers who engage in imaginative mental
experiences also experience increases in experiential-based outcomes (H5B), helping us to understand imaginative mental experiences as an alternative consumption experience, generally, no matter the chances of consumption. Seeing that consumers who feel they have a smaller chance of attaining their consumption desires gain a stronger negative outcome should not discount the fact that these same consumers also increase their positive emotion-based outcomes. This likely suggests that while the experience of the imagination offers consumers the ability to create an alternative consumer journey where consumers can explore their desired consumption experiences, they also are aware of the impossibility of their desires. When a consumer dreams of a sports car, they may recognize this may not actually materialize, but they can still gain the benefits of happily imagining the experience of racing down the highway in their sports car.

Study 3B examines whether imaginative mental experiences featuring desired consumption items that are self-expressive provide consumers with greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes than imaginative mental experiences for those items that are non-self-expressive. Evidence shows that as consumer’s desires increase in self-expressiveness, consumers who increase their engagement in imaginative mental experiences gain increases in emotion-based outcomes (H6A) and experiential-based outcomes (H6B). These increases for consumers who feel their consumption desires are self-expressive support this research’s suggestion that consumers gain increased outcomes from those imaginative mental experiences that are highly relevant to the consumer, and imaginative mental experiences are most powerful when they involve consumption items that express who consumers wish to be. These findings confirm that the strength of the benefits arising for consumers are linked to their perceptions of their desired items; many items can be desirable, but not all desirable items may be something that aligns with who they are or who they wish to become. Such findings are important for understanding how consumers seek out products and the conditions under which inspiring imagination in consumers may be more or less powerful, depending on a consumers’ relationship to the products.

Study 3C examines whether focusing on either accurate or inaccurate presumptions consumers create within their imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to gain greater emotion-based,
experiential-based outcomes, and greater beliefs and feelings regarding their presumptions. Evidence shows that as consumer’s presumptions increase in accuracy, consumers’ emotion-based outcomes (H7A) are not significantly affected. Evidence also suggests that when consumers focus on inaccurate presumptions, consumers gain a more vivid imaginative mental experience (H7B). As well, consumers who are prompted to focus on their inaccurate presumptions – those presumptions that may not reflect the potential reality of consumption – gain greater increases in positive feelings towards their presumptions than consumers who are prompted to focus on accurate presumptions within their imaginative mental experience (H7C). These increases for consumers who presume their imaginative mental experiences to inaccurately reflect what may be possible for consumption suggest imaginative mental experiences do not necessarily need to reflect reality as it may be more enjoyable overall to focus on what may not actually occur in reality. This suggests that even reminding consumers to think about what is inaccurate about their imaginative mental experience may in fact offer them greater positive feelings towards their imaginative mental experience, and therefore their created alternative consumer journey.

Overall, each of these research questions and the related inquiries made within this thesis offer important theoretical and managerial implications, which are discussed in the next two sections.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

Imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the opportunity to experience desired consumption experiences through their imagination when consumption is viewed to be unattainable. When consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences for unattainable desired consumption items, consumers create an alternative consumer journey that increases emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, even though they are not presently progressing to a consumption transaction. These findings augment the marketing literature’s understanding of consumption processes and consumer journeys to capture a specific consumer situation widely experienced by consumers, but has not been previously discussed within marketing and consumer behavior literature: not all consumers can or will be able to attain all things they desire, yet this does not necessarily diminish their desires. Using the consumer
journeys framework (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), this thesis demonstrates that imaginative mental experiences are a relevant touchpoint allowing consumers who are confined to the pre-purchase stage of a consumer journey when desired consumption items are viewed as unattainable to explore their desired consumption experiences. Consequently, imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the opportunity to create an alternative consumer journey.

Presently, the consumer journey does not account for the ways in which consumers may employ their imagination and pre-purchase touchpoints to develop an imaginative scenario of what they wish to attain or experience through consumption when consumers perceive consumption as unattainable. Yet, this thesis demonstrates, via an integration of literature aiming to pre-purchase touchpoints, imagination, daydreams, fantasy creation and consumption dreams, consumers can engage with imagination to explore, understand and experience an alternative “consumption experience” even when they feel consumption is unattainable. Thus, imaginative mental experiences are an important contribution to the understanding of the consumer journey and its respective stages, specifically the understanding of the pre-purchase stage of consumer journeys. This allows for a greater understanding of consumer’s engagement in imagination through the progression and development of consumer journeys as imaginative mental experiences are the pre-purchase touchpoint most relevant to consumers who perceive desired consumption items as unattainable. The imaginative mental experiences consumers create involve an immersive exploration of the experiences they wish to have when they attain their consumption desires. These experiences incorporate their prior knowledge and prior experience.

By understanding that consumers who recognize unattainable consumption desires can create alternative consumer journeys via imaginative mental experiences, this thesis incorporates consumers who are not actively engaging in traditional consumer journeys but are instead engaging in alternative consumer journeys within our framework of consumption. Rather than assuming consumers must linearly progress from pre-purchase to purchase to post-purchase to be fully engaging in consumer journeys, another possible way to think about how imaginative mental experiences fit within the consumer journey framework is that these alternative consumer journeys are really an ongoing consumer journey, where
consumers can remain within the pre-purchase stage for much longer than we might expect, or possibly terminate or resolve their journeys without progression to the purchase stage. Consumers, therefore, may not always experience consumer journeys in a linear fashion as previously suggested; based on the findings of this thesis, consumers may adapt their consumer journeys to accommodate their own perceptions of unattainability and engage in imaginative mental experiences to develop an alternative expression of a consumer journey that fits with their own personal understandings of their desired consumption items.

While this thesis’s main contribution focuses on the augmentation of the conceptual understanding of consumption and consumer journeys to account for the imaginative mental experiences of consumers who view consumption desires as unattainable, this thesis’s theoretical contribution is to prompt the discipline of marketing to think more about the role of imagination in consumer’s daily lives generally. Here, the focus has been to understand how imagination is employed by consumers who recognize they cannot consume something they desire but are able to employ the imagination to their own benefit and it is evident that imagination offers consumers benefits in this context. Consumers who recognize their consumption desires are unattainable engage with imaginative mental experiences to gain an “experience” within the mind as they recognize they are not actually preparing to consume at this time; this perspective should be integrated within our understanding of consumption generally. Consumers likely apply their imagination to many consumption scenarios – not just perceiving a desired consumption item as unattainable – and this dissertation’s findings highlight that exploring this topic has relevant implications for how we understand consumers own interactions with their desires via imagination. In exploring how imagination is relevant to consumers who wish to consume something but suggest that it is unattainable, this thesis uncovers how the imagination is useful to consumers and help to articulate why the imagination has relevance to consumers and the marketing discipline, helping to address what Zaltman (2016) and others (Jenkins and Molesworth 2017; Pham 2013) suggest is a requirement of our discipline.
7.3 Managerial Implications

While this dissertation focuses on consumers who actively explore consumption items they understand to be unattainable via the imagination and are not engaging in marketing transactions, there are important implications for the managerial practice of marketing. Central to understanding how consumers interact with unattainable desired consumption items is understanding that consumers who wish to consume something may wish and hope for a very long period of time. Managers are often interested in growing their customer base, thus consumers who are interested in an item but have not yet purchased the item represent “potential” or “future” customers, yet research suggests managers often know very little about what their customers think (Hult et al. 2017). Managerial practice also does not necessarily acknowledge that consumers may remain within the “potential” stage for such a long duration of time, yet findings of this dissertation contradict this. Further, consumers may take many actions to resolve their desires – either by finding something else that works in place of their desires, creating tradeoffs by substituting for something that is lesser quality or lesser cost, or they may eventually “get over” their desire and cease to be a “potential” or “future” customer. Managers must undertake greater efforts to understand how to assist consumers in transitioning from “potential” to “actual” to increase their customer base and help consumers achieve their desires. Often, marketing research focuses on understanding how consumers made their decisions, but not why consumers may not be able to purchase or how consumers think about the time horizon that exists between the present and potentially consuming in the future. Thus, managers must adapt their market research strategies to not only ask consumers how and why they became consumers, but also ask non-consumers why they remain non-consumers who still desire their offerings. Managers can then begin to understand how imagination may play an important role in how consumers think about their future consumption and where marketing efforts may facilitate consumers achieving unattainable consumption desires. The consumer interviews discussed in this thesis suggest there is often a great deal of “unknowns” in understanding the parameters of the desired item or consumption, representing a tremendous marketing opportunity in how managers communicate with
consumers as well as help them understand what is possible through consumption, with aims to either shorten the duration of time prior to becoming a customer or helping consumers avoid getting “over” their desires and moving on without purchasing at all.

Findings of this dissertation also demonstrate that consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences gain positive emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes, no matter whether consumers feel they will or will not consume in the future. Managers may worry that if the imaginative experience is rewarding, this may diminish enthusiasm for purchasing in the future. While this is an important question to address, managers should recognize there is likely a link between the imaginative mental experience for the unattainable desired consumption item and the consumption decisions consumers must make each and every day. Understanding that the imaginative mental experiences consumers experience relating to unattainable consumption items may inform or impact how consumers make decisions for other consumption decisions may improve marketing decisions and communication strategies with consumers for related decision making. Managers can examine how their own products and services may complement consumers’ unattainable consumption desires in ways that may allow consumers to engage in consumption transactions for items that are supportive to their presently unattainable consumption desires. While consumers may not be able to have everything they want, they still must make buying decisions in the marketplace each and every day, and their imaginative mental experiences of the unattainable may affect their decisions about the attainable.

Studying the imaginative mental experiences consumers create for unattainable desired consumption items also demonstrates there are several ways in which marketing efforts employ prompting the imagination; this is a frequent suggestion made by interviewees within this research. Consumers recognize a marketing material for their desired item, and they suggest this might elicit an imaginative mental experience of their unattainable yet desired consumption item. Marketing efforts, therefore, are a powerful tool in prompting the imaginative mental experiences of consumers. Findings of the experimental studies suggest greater emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes for those consumers who focus on self-expressive unattainable consumption desires, which suggests managers who
offer items consumers find to be more self-expressive rather than less self-expressive may benefit more
when encouraging imaginative engagement for potential consumers. However, findings of the
experimental studies also suggest imagining something that is less likely to occur prompts greater
negative emotion-based outcomes, even though the imaginative mental experiences generally provide all
consumers with positive emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes. Marketers must be aware that
for those consumers who feel they may never attain their desires, imaginative appeals also remind
consumers of this reality.

Overall, this thesis, while focused on consumers who are not prepared to make a purchase in the
foreseeable future, does suggest managers must pay attention to how consumers interact with their
consumption desires via the imagination over time as imaginative mental experiences offer consumers the
opportunity to engage in a recurring and adapting experience of the imagination as consumers engage
over time. Common refrains such as “I’ve waited my whole life to get a sports car,” or “this is the trip of a
lifetime,” perhaps suggest the results of the imagination influence journey towards the purchase
transaction. Thus, managers have the opportunity to influence the perceptions consumers’ have of
potential experiences with their desired consumption items long before consumers may attain those items.
As well, managers must not only focus on how consumers who find their consumption desires to be
unattainable as the findings of Study 1 suggest imaginative mental experiences are not just happening for
consumers who find their desires to be unattainable but also for consumers who find their potential
desires are linked to how they view themselves. Thus, managers must more generally incorporate an
understanding of the consumers’ imagination within their understanding of and approach to consumers.

Finally, a caveat of imaginative mental experiences must be addressed; consumers who engage in
imaginative mental experiences recognize their imagination may not necessarily reflect reality; thus, it is
important to understand that while the enjoyable imaginative mental experience may excite consumers
and keep their hope for the potential of consumption alive, it may also deviate greatly from what may
occur in reality, if they are to consume. Many consumers acknowledge this gap, but this gap should be
recognized by marketers as they are the caretakers of the actual experiences consumers embark upon and
co-create with marketers in the marketplace. Managers can therefore make careful choices in their marketing efforts to ensure they do not oversell the potential experience. Managers must also recognize the role they play in the total consumption experience, as the imaginative mental experiences often focus on what happens for consumers once they attain the item of their desires – suggesting that after care services, customer support and the managing of long-term relationships may all be impacted by how consumers imagine their ongoing consumer journeys.

7.4 Limitations

This research is not without limitations. First, while unattainability manifests for various reasons, there is no boundary as to the “kind” or “type” of unattainability applied to the data collection in this dissertation as this research aims to broadly understand how consumers approach unattainability. Data collection therefore focused on perceptions of unattainability as they were relevant to the participant – in that sense, the participants all shared a collective sense of unattainability, even though from participant to participant the parameters of their own unattainability different immensely, which has helped illuminate the variety of ways in which unattainability manifests for consumers. Unattainability encompasses many facets; thus, further examination of various aspects of consumer unattainability may highlight specific nuances relevant to the imaginative mental experiences consumers create. For example, how unattainability is framed – whether something is strictly unattainable for financial reasons or something is unattainable for a confluence of reasons – may directly impact the imaginative mental experiences consumers create.

Second, the focus of this dissertation as it relates to imaginative mental experience engagement is predicated on notions of unattainability. This dissertation focuses specifically on perceptions of unattainability to shed light on a common consumer quandary: we simply cannot have everything we wish to have. All consumers can, to some degree, relate to feelings of unattainability, and this dissertation focused on understanding this aspect of consumption. Future studies of imaginative mental experiences may focus on other ways in which imaginative mental experiences may offer value for consumers who
are curious about their consumption desires, fearful of the consequences of consumption, and imagination for the sake of imagination. Each of these represent important aspects of consumer desire exploration, which may impact how imaginative mental experiences are created, managed, and revisited by consumers over time.

Within this research’s theoretical framework, many pre-purchase touchpoints are discussed as an area within the literature that has limited information. The discussion of pre-purchase touchpoints in this work is mainly limited to conference proceedings papers (e.g., Fournier and Guiry 1993; MacInnis and Price 1990; Phillips 1996; Phillips, Olson, and Baumgartner 1995), thus there are not many established measures to draw upon relative to the definition of each different process, suggesting a general limitation of prior work. To overcome the potential limitations of drawing on limited prior metrics for various pre-consumption touchpoint topics, this thesis attempts to develop relevant measures to observe engagement in imaginative mental experiences. The measures employed in this work to study imaginative mental experiences as a pre-consumption touchpoint involving the imagination is an attempt to more clearly outline a construct reflecting behaviors consumers demonstrate when engaging in imagination for consumption items when they appear unattainable. Consequently, the chosen measures are used across several studies with consistent evidence of item convergence and reliability. However, a more formal attempt to validate items which capture imaginative mental experiences may help continue the study of this topic as the understanding of how consumers engage with imagination is a relevant part of consumption and requires greater attention both in theory development and operationalization.

The discussions of unattainable consumption items that are part of this dissertation’s data collection are based on self-selected desired consumption items. Because all consumers in this work self-selected which consumption items they discussed, it is possible consumers select specific kinds or types of items for their imaginative mental experiences and therefore may also opt out of exploring other desired consumption items via imaginative mental experiences. While this likely does accurately represent the most salient consumption desires consumer have, their selection of a desired consumption item may be correlated with how hopeful they are of attaining their desired item. It is possible that how
hopeful consumers are may impact whether they perceive investing in the imagination is worth it or not, which does not account for possible differences in imaginative mental experiences for items consumers desire, but are perhaps less hopeful for. Participants of the critical incident technique interviews do recognize there are things they wouldn’t choose to explore through their imagination, pointing at the opportunity to more thoroughly explore potential differences in how hopeful consumers are of their unattainable consumption desires. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the things people choose to explore via the imagination, and thus, the potential variation in levels of hope are extraneous to the purpose of this research. However, future work may discuss the potential boundaries of unattainable consumption items consumers find relevant to explore within the imagination, as well as how consumers navigate their perceived investment in their imagination.

Lastly, the outcome variables of interest in this dissertation are purposefully limited to experiential-based and emotion-based outcomes. While more traditional downstream consumer outcomes (e.g., purchase intentions, feelings towards the brand, willingness to share positive word-of-mouth) may appear relevant here, the exploration of outcomes is specifically constrained to emotion-based and experiential-based outcomes to explore the benefits gained from imaginative mental experience engagement, separate from the possibilities of imaginative mental experiences being a conduit for downstream actions as it is important to understand the phenomena of imaginative mental experiences in isolation first. Much opportunity exists to explore these types of downstream consumer outcomes as they relate to imaginative mental experience engagement in a more controlled and specified setting as understanding the consequences of engaging in imaginative mental experiences have important implications for marketing practice. Additional potential research streams are suggested in the following section.

7.5 Future Research

As touched upon in the limitations section above, there are a wealth of opportunities arising from this dissertation’s initial inquiry as to imaginative mental experience engagement when consumers
recognize desired consumption as unattainable. First, while this dissertation focuses on examining imaginative mental experiences for consumers who view their consumption desires as unattainable, the idea that consumers interact with imagination generally underlies this dissertation’s conceptual framework, and there is ample opportunity to explore how consumers employ the imagination relative to various types of consumption desires and consumption situations. Future research should examine the multitude of ways consumers may employ imaginative mental experiences within all stages of the consumer journey, as there is already some evidence in this work that consumers engage in imaginative mental experiences for more than just unattainable consumption items.

Consistent with Hirschman and Holbrook’s (1982) original suggestions, consumers engage in consumption for many more reasons than just simply need fulfillment. Consumers, therefore, may engage in imaginative mental experiences for other potential reasons, such as curiosity, commitment-phobia, or being fearful of the consumption experience, as MacInnis and Price (1987) originally suggest. Thus, a more specific exploration of how imaginative mental experiences arise for consumers under various consumption circumstances – be it curious about their desires or fearful of the actual consumption experience or consequences of consumption – would help to further synthesize the literature on both pre-purchase touchpoints and contribute to the ongoing development of our understanding of the consumer journey and the many touchpoints consumers interact with during the journey.

This research also just begins to scratch the surface of the benefits and outcomes that may arise from consumer engagement in imaginative mental experiences. Further exploration and understanding of how consumers benefit from imaginative mental experiences may allow for more specific actions for marketers; for instance, exploring how imaginative mental experiences impact related consumption decisions – as an example, while a boat is desirable in the long-term, a consumer may, as a result of imaginative mental experience engagement regarding the boat, be more likely to seek out vacation opportunities involving boats, or signal to others their interest in boats through magazine subscriptions and home décor choices. It is possible that, under certain conditions, our long-term desires may fuel many
of the consumption decisions made between present day and the forever reaching future and these situations require further exploration.

Taking an alternative approach, it may be possible, under certain conditions, for imaginative mental experiences to allow consumers to redirect their focus onto different consumption priorities. Studying consumers who do not attain their long-desired desires may develop knowledge about how imaginative mental experiences allow consumers to process desires, balance desires, and potentially to lead consumers to lose hope or give up on their desires.

While this dissertation examined consumers who felt their desires are unattainable, it may be possible for consumer who know they are going to consume and are directed to imagine their consumption desires in advance to experience greater consumption outcomes, consistent with prior theorizing about the connections between pre-purchase touchpoints and consumption outcomes (MacInnis and Price 1990). Studying the conditions under which marketers may aide in developing imaginative mental experiences for consumers who are actively preparing to consume may extend these understandings.

At a more general level, the study of the imagination is linked with topics such as creativity and innovation. Exploring connections between imaginative mental experience engagement and state and trait levels of creativity may tell us more about how consumers cope with not being able to access their desires. There are likely also important links between individual differences in innovativeness, creativity and risk taking that may enhance what we know about consumers who engage in imaginative mental experiences.

Another avenue worth exploring through the lens of imaginative mental experiences are topics such as overconsumption and consumer debt management. Consumers don’t always ignore the desire to consume and many consumers have rising debt levels, which is alarming at many levels. The application of imaginative mental experiences to this topic area may yield techniques for the management of consumer desires and pro-active strategies to mitigate overconsumption. In research by Arens and Hamilton (2016) which investigates similarities and differences between substitutes, focusing on
differences between substitute alternatives can reduce desire for the unattained alternative. Exploration of
the circumstances under which imaginative mental experiences may be an effective strategy for
consumers to explore desires while also avoiding market transactions that contribute to overconsumption
is another area worth exploring.

While this work discusses the specific application of the imagination to unattainable consumption
experiences, there is a large opportunity for the study of imagination as it relates to many aspects of the
consumption process (Coulter 2016; Zaltman 2016). For example, marketing efforts often employ tactics
that encourage consumers to “imagine” or “dream” about what it might be like to own what they are
offering. However, the effects of these tactics are relatively unknown. Thus, exploring the appeals
marketers use that evoke or encourage imaginative mental experience engagement and under which
conditions these appeals are most effective may yield productive insights to assist in marketing efforts.

At the heart of this research topic is an inquiry about consumer desires. One area that is ripe for
greater exploration is the study of desire itself – marketing has a clear understanding of the feelings and
expression of desires (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2000, 2003), yet Pham (2013) suggests we still do not
know enough about the “desire” stage of consumption. This research offers a glimpse into how consumers
who feel certain desires are unattainable employ imagination to explore their desired consumption
experiences. By continuing to explore the factors surrounding how consumers manage, navigate, balance
and express their desires in both the short- and long-term, the “desire” stage will not remain as a
mysterious part of consumption and consumer journeys. As this research has suggested, all consumers
cannot have all desires, but, with imagination, the possibilities one can explore are endless.
References


Wang, Chen and Yanliu Huang (2018), “‘I Want to Know the Answer! Give Me Fish ’n’ Chips!’: The Impact of Curiosity on Indulgent Choice,” Journal of Consumer Research, 44 (5), 1052–67.


Appendix A

GREB Approval Form

December 15, 2015

Ms. Kimberley Mosher
Ph.D. Candidate
Smith School of Business
Queen’s University
Georges Hall
143 Union Street
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GBUS-479-15; Room # 60170868
Title: "GBUS-479-15: Consumption Possibilities"

Dear Ms. Mosher,

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GBUS-479-15: Consumption Possibilities" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.16) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://corporate.queensu.ca/ROM50-Researcher-Admin; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unanticipated event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application at https://corporate.queensu.ca/ROM50-Researcher-Admin; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for Amendment of Approved Studies". Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gill Irving, at the Office of Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Peter Dacin, Faculty Supervisor
    Dr. Pamela Murphy, Chair, Unit REB
    Mrs. Nancy Chase, Dept. Admin.
Appendix B

Exploratory Consumer Interviews: Recruitment Notice

Direct Connections
(Individuals I have a personal connection to already)

Dear [Name],

As you may know, I am working on completing a doctorate in marketing at the Smith School of Business. As part of my research, I am gathering responses from individuals about their own personal consumption desires. The goal of this research is to understand the experiences that consumers may create through imagining and fantasizing about consumption objects they desire.

I am reaching out to you to see if you are willing and able to participate in my research. In order to participate, we would need to arrange an interview time, which can be done either in person (in a setting of your choice) or via Skype. The interview should last no more than 30 minutes and would help improve my understanding of how consumers engage with their consumption desires.

If you are interested, please contact me at 3km41@queensu.ca.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks,
Kimberley
Appendix C

Exploratory Consumer Interviews: Interview Protocol

**Introduction and Rapport Building:**
In this study, we are interested in understanding the ways in which you think about consumption items that you desire but have not yet experienced. Through this research, we aim to better understand how individuals think when they think about consumption desires they wish to have or experience. To help us uncover insights relating to consumption desires you wish to have, I will ask you a series of questions relating to your own consumption desires. You will have the opportunity to choose which of your own consumption desires we talk about. At any point, I may ask clarifying questions based on what you tell me.

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. I will be recording our interview to aide in the analysis phase of our study.

[Have consent form signed]

**Theme 1: Consumption Desires**
There are often many things or experiences individuals desire. What are some of the things you wish to own or experience?
Clarifying questions may include:

- What about these desires are particularly interesting or attractive to you?

[Note: If multiple desires are brought up immediately, I will ask them to pick one to focus on for the purposes of this interview]

Please describe this particular consumption desire.
Clarifying questions may include:

- Can you describe the item/experience for me?
- What are some of the features or benefits this desire offers?
- What makes this item/experience desirable to you?
- How long have you wanted this item/experience?
- What got you interested in this item/experience?

**Theme 2: Activities Surrounding Consumption Desires**
When you think of this item/experience, what do you do to better understand your desire?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Are there specific activities you engage in to better understand your desire?
  - Are there thoughts or images that come to mind that help you better understand your desire?
  - Do you do things to help better understand what this desire would be like?

What types of things remind you of your desire, if you are not already thinking about it?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Do you think about your desire more when you see an example of what you want?
  - Do you talk about your desire with other people? If so, who?
When does your desire come to mind?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Are there specific activities that remind you of your desire?
  - Are there individuals that remind you of your desire?
  - Do you ever engage in daydreaming about your desire?
  - Do you ever imagine what you would do with this item/experience?
  - How often do you think about your desire?

How likely are you to attain this desire?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - When do you think you will attain this desire?
  - What types of plans do you have for this item/experience?
  - What feelings or thoughts arise for you when you think about this desire?

**Closing Questions:**

Thank you for answering all of my questions.

To complete this interview, I have a few more questions aimed at understanding the overall demographics of our interview participants:

- Age?
- Occupation?
- Marital Status?
- Do you have children? If so, how many and what are their ages?
- What is your educational background?
- What is your annual income level?
Appendix D

Study 1: Unattainable Consumption Survey Questions

Page 1: Consumption Possibilities
In this study, we are interested in better understanding the types of branded products that you think about owning and using, but also acknowledge that you may never actually own in real life.
Throughout this study, you will be asked to think about the branded products that you wish to have, but also understand are unlikely to be achievable. You will be asked questions about your thoughts and feelings relating to these specific branded items, as well as questions about your own consumption habits more generally.
On the next page, we will ask you to identify branded products that you wish to own, but you are unlikely to own in your future. For example, you may wish to own a Tesla, experience a Lear Jet, or perhaps buy a Hermès Birkin Bag, but you may also understand that while desirable, these types of things are unlikely to occur for various reasons.

Page 2: Wish List Generation
Reflecting on the branded products you think you would like to have or experience, but that you acknowledge that are unrealistic for some reason, we would now like to ask you to create a “wish list” of the three most important branded products and their product categories that come to mind.
Please create your wish list in the space below. In each box, please list both the brand name and the product category of the item you wish to have.

Wish List Item 1: __________________________
Wish List Item 2: __________________________
Wish List Item 3: __________________________

Page 3: Wish List Item Descriptions
Thank you for creating your wish list on the previous page.
Based on the list you created on the previous page, we would like you to describe each of the branded products you wish to own in the spaces below.
On the next page, we will ask you to identify the reasons why you are interested in these specific products as well as why they are unattainable.
Therefore, at this time, we are not so much interested in the experience you think this item would allow you, but the physical characteristics of the products you wish to have. Please be brief, but you may find it helpful to include details pertaining to the features, attributes and benefits of each products.
Page 4: Focal Desire Identification – Instructions

Thank you for describing your wish list's items on the previous page.

Moving forward, we now ask you to choose one item from your wish list that you would like to focus on for the remainder of the study.

Please take a moment to decide which product you would like to concentrate on.

Page 5: Focal Desire Identification

From the list you created, we would like you to select just one product to focus on for the remainder of the study.

In the respective spaces below, we would like you to write both the brand name and the product category to which the brand belongs.

When stating the product category that your desired branded product belongs to, please be as specific as possible. As an example, if you desire a Ferrari (branded product), the product category is best represented by "sports car" versus "automobile."
Please complete the following sentence:
The desired brand that I wish to have is: ___________________________

Please complete the following sentence as specifically as possible:
The product category you associate with this brand is: ______________________________

Previously, we asked you to describe this product when you identified it as part of your wish list. We would now like to ask you to describe why you would like to have something from this specific product category.

Additionally, we would like to ask you to tell us why this specific product category is unattainable for you.

Page 6: Antecedents of Imaginative Mental Experiences
Thank you for identifying a “desired consumption item” as the unattainable product you wish to have and would like to focus on for the remainder of the study.

We’d now like to ask you some specific questions about your interest in a “desired consumption item” made by “brand”.

Specifically, we will now ask you some questions about potential factors you feel prevent you from having a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, which you may have mentioned previously.

Please complete the following sentence.
Even though I desire a “desired consumption item”, I do not have it presently because:
I am presently unable to have a “desired consumption item” because my financial situation would not allow it.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I am presently unable to have a “desired consumption item” because I do not feel that I have the appropriate skills/knowledge required to own or use this product.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Please describe any relevant skills/knowledge that you would need to attain prior to buying or using a “desired consumption item”.

I am presently unable to have a “desired consumption item” because I do not have the time to enjoy the benefits of a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 7: Prior Knowledge of Desired Consumption Item

Thank you for your answers on the previous page. We are now interested in understanding what you already know about a “desired consumption item” by “brand”. Below, we will ask you some questions about how much you presently know about the “desired consumption item” product category.

I know a lot about the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
I do not feel very knowledgeable about the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Compared to most other people, I know a less about the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

When it comes to the “desired consumption item” product category, I really don't know a lot.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 8: Relationships with Others

Often, our consumption decisions are made or influenced by significant others, family members or close friends.

When you think about a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, it may be possible that other individuals in your life play a role in how you feel about buying or owning a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.
I don’t think that my significant other would want me to buy or own a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I do not have a Significant Other (N/A) (44)

I don’t think that my family would want me to buy or own a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I don’t think that my close friends would want me to buy or own a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 9: Self-Concept Development

Often, our consumption decisions affect how we think about who we are and who we want to be.

When you think about a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, you may think about how buying or owning a “desired consumption item” by “brand” might suit you or who you want to be.

If you were able to purchase a “desired consumption item”, it would enhance who you are.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

If you were able to own a “desired consumption item”, it would help you become who you wish to be.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
If you were able to own a “desired consumption item”, it would represent how you wish other people to think of you.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 10: Ranking of Unattainability Reasons
Thank you for your answers thus far. Previously, we asked you questions about possible reasons why you may feel that a “desired consumption item” by “brand” is currently unattainable. Before moving on, we would like to ask you to rank the various reasons we presented to you, from the most relevant to the least relevant.

Please drag and drop the options below so that the most relevant reason is at the top, and the least relevant reason is at the bottom.

- You require additional financial resources to purchase a “desired consumption item”
- You require additional skills to be able to own or use a “desired consumption item”
- You require additional knowledge to be able to own or use a “desired consumption item”
- Your significant other does not want you to own a “desired consumption item”
- Your family does not want you to own a “desired consumption item”
- Your close friends do not want you to own a “desired consumption item”
- You do not feel that a “desired consumption item” fits with who you wish to be
- You do not feel that you have the time to enjoy the benefits of a “desired consumption item”

Finally, are there any other reasons a “desired consumption item” is unattainable that have not been captured thus far?

Page 11: Imagery of Desired Consumption Item
Thinking specifically about your wish to own a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, we would now like to ask you about the thoughts and feelings you have towards a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

196
When I think about owning or using a “desired consumption item”, my thoughts include the sights, smells, and/or sounds of the experience I believe a “desired consumption item” offers.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

When I think about owning or using a “desired consumption item”, I often play out many different scenarios of what I would do with a “desired consumption item”.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

When I think about owning or using a “desired consumption item”, I spend considerable amounts of time imagining what it would be like to have a “desired consumption item”.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

Relative to other things I wish to have, I spend considerably more time thinking about what it would be like to have a “desired consumption item”.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

**Page 12: Imagery of Desired Consumption Item**

When thinking about a “desired consumption item”, how vivid or detailed are the images that come to mind?

O Not at all Vivid
O
O Vivid
O
O Extremely Vivid
When thinking about a “desired consumption item”, how easy is it to see yourself actually using a “desired consumption item”?

O Very Difficult
O Difficult
O Neutral
O Easy
O Very Easy

Page 13: Approach Actions

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, have you taken any actions to get closer to owning a “desired consumption item”?

O Yes
O No

If you have taken actions to get closer to owning a “desired consumption item”, please provide a short description of what types of things you have done previously to get closer to owning a “desired consumption item”. (For example, if you desire a sports car, you may have taken one for a test drive already.)

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, how important is it for you to eventually attain a “desired consumption item”?

O Not at all important
O Slightly important
O Moderately important
O Very important
O Extremely important

Page 14: Pre-Consumption Activities

Previously we asked you about how knowledgeable you feel you are about a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

We would now like to ask you about the specific ways that you might have previously increased your knowledge of a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

198
Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, which activities have you done in the past in order to increase your knowledge about a “desired consumption item”? (Please select all that apply).

☐ Conducted online searches about a “desired consumption item” (e.g., Google searches)
☐ Visited information websites specific to a “desired consumption item” (e.g., blogs, Wikipedia)
☐ Watched online videos relating about a “desired consumption item” (e.g., YouTube)
☐ Browsed online retailers for items related to a “desired consumption item” (e.g., Amazon.com, thebay.com)
☐ Downloaded or used smartphone Apps related to a “desired consumption item”
☐ Browsed social media sites for information or examples of a “desired consumption item” (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest)
☐ Clicked on an online advertisement that is related to a “desired consumption item”

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, which activities have you done in the past in order to increase your knowledge about a “desired consumption item”? (Please select all that apply).

☐ Browsed within a shopping mall, plaza or store for a “desired consumption item”
☐ Viewed advertising material for a “desired consumption item”
☐ Searched for news articles relating to a “desired consumption item”
☐ Browsed magazines that featured articles related to a “desired consumption item”
☐ Attended events related to a “desired consumption item” (e.g., trade show)

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, which activities have you done in the past in order to increase your knowledge about a “desired consumption item”? (Please select all that apply).

☐ Asked friends for information about a “desired consumption item”
☐ Talked to friends about your desire for a “desired consumption item”
☐ Asked family members for information about a “desired consumption item”
☐ Talked to family members about your desire for a “desired consumption item”
☐ Talked to individuals that currently own or have experienced a “desired consumption item”
☐ Talked with your significant other about your desire for a “desired consumption item”

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, which activities have you done in the past in order to increase your knowledge about a “desired consumption item”? (Please select all that apply).

☐ Engaged in hobbies related to a “desired consumption item”
☐ Researched information about related activities or items that may be more accessible at this time
Page 15: Additional Pre-Consumption Activities

Are there any additional things you do in order to increase your knowledge about a “desired consumption item”?

Please list any additional things you do in the box below.

As I've acquired more knowledge about a “desired consumption item”, my mental image of the “desired consumption item” I want has changed and adapted to new information.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

As I've acquired more knowledge about a “desired consumption item”, my mental image of the “desired consumption item” I want has improved and is clearer.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Referring to the various activities presented on the previous page, how has your mental image of a “desired consumption item” changed as a result of engaging in these activities?

Page 16: Imaginative Mental Experiences

Thank you for answering the previous questions.

Previously we asked you to describe the features and benefits of a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

We would now like you to think carefully about what you think the experience of owning or using a “desired consumption item” by “brand” would be like.
In thinking about what it would be like to have a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, please complete the following statements.

The mental image I have in my mind of owning a “desired consumption item” includes...

What types of things could owning a “desired consumption item” allow you to do?

Page 17: Imaginative Mental Experiences (continued)

Imagining what it would be like to have a “desired consumption item” is enjoyable.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

Reviewing the mental image I have of a “desired consumption item” in my mind is exciting.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree
Reviewing the mental image I have of a “desired consumption item” in my mind is rewarding.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

Thinking about a “desired consumption item” reminds me how much I want it.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

Page 18: Imaginative Mental Experiences (continued)

Even though you are not yet able to own a “desired consumption item”, is it enjoyable to think about what it would be like to own a “desired consumption item”? If so, why do you think it is enjoyable?

How does thinking about the possibilities of owning a “desired consumption item” make you feel?

Are there any downsides to thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” might be like prior to actually experiencing it in real life?
Page 19: Outcomes of Imaginative Mental Experiences

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like gives me peace of mind.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like leave me feeling content.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like leaves me feeling satisfied.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like improves my current mood.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like does not make me feel good.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” will be like reminds me that I really want a “desired consumption item” because of what it does.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

There are other things I could buy that offer the same functionality as a “desired consumption item”, but I’d rather have a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

If I do not get to own a “desired consumption item” in real life, thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” may be like is adequate enough for me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Thinking about what owning a “desired consumption item” would be like gives me a sense of completion.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Picturing what owning a “desired consumption item” is like is enough of an indulgence for me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
Page 21: Brand Outcomes

We would now like to ask you some questions relating to your feelings and thoughts about your desire for a “desired consumption item” made by “brand”.

When I think about owning a “desired consumption item”, I feel closer to “brand” than when I do not think about owning a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

When I think about owning a “desired consumption item”, I feel more aligned with “brand” than when I do not think about owning a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

When I think about owning a “desired consumption item”, I feel more strongly about “brand” than when I do not think about owning a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

When I think about owning a “desired consumption item”, I feel more favorably about “brand” than when I do not think about owning a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
When I think about owning a “desired consumption item”, my opinions about “brand” are stronger than when I do not think about owning a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 22: Brand Outcomes (continued)

Having a “desired consumption item” made by “brand” is something that others would definitely take notice of.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

A “desired consumption item” made by “brand” is something that a lot of people know about.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

A “desired consumption item” made by “brand” is something only a few people know about.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

“Brand” has many competitors in the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
“Brand” actively competes with rival firms in the “desired consumption item” product category.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Some of the rival firms that I think “brand” competes with in the product category are:

If a counterfeit version of a “brand” is available, how likely are you to buy a counterfeit “brand”?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely
- Not Applicable (N/A)

Page 23: Alternative Consumption Activities

Thank you for your answers on the previous page.

We would now like to ask you about some additional things you may do because a “desired consumption item” is unattainable.

*If someone you know buys a “desired consumption item”, how likely are you to ask them about their “desired consumption item”?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

*If you see that someone else has a “desired consumption item”, how likely are you to pay attention their use of a “desired consumption item”?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely
If you are currently unable to buy a “desired consumption item”, how likely are you to buy something else as an alternative to a “desired consumption item”?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

If you are currently unable to buy a “desired consumption item”, how likely are you to try to ignore your desire to have a “desired consumption item”?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Undecided
- Likely
- Very Likely

Page 24: Expectations of Actual Consumption

Throughout the study, you answered questions about your desire for a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your own expectations of what it might be like if you are actually able to own a “desired consumption item” by “brand”.

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, how important is it for you to eventually attain a “desired consumption item”?

- Very Unimportant
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Neither Important nor Unimportant
- Somewhat Important
- Very Important

Thinking about a “desired consumption item”, is a “desired consumption item” available to you to purchase right now?

- Definitely not available to purchase
- Probably not available to purchase
- Don't know
- Probably available to purchase
- Definitely available to purchase
How likely are you to attain a “desired consumption item” in your lifetime?

- Extremely Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

I could not purchase a “desired consumption item”, even if is readily available to purchase today.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Despite wanting to purchase a “desired consumption item” right now, I could not purchase it today.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 25: Expectations of Actual Consumption (continued)

Imagining that you are able to have a “desired consumption item” by “brand”, we would now like to ask you a few questions about what you think the experience would be like.

I expect that actually experiencing a “desired consumption item” will be enjoyable.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I expect that actually experiencing a “desired consumption item” will be rewarding.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
I do not think that I will be disappointed when I experience a “desired consumption item”.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I expect that actually experiencing a “desired consumption item” will never live up to my expectations.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I expect that actually experiencing a “desired consumption item” may be less rewarding than I expect.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

**Page 26: General Consumption Habits**

Thank you for completing this questionnaire regarding your interest in owning a “desired consumption item” by “brand”. We would now like you to think more generally about your own consumption habits.

**Relative to others, how often do you dream about things that you do not have?**

- Not at All
- Occasionally
- Frequently

**In general, I always have something in mind that I look forward to buying.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

210
Ads for expensive new products and fun-filled experiences typically give me ideas for things to put on my "wish list" of things to own.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

I often think how great it would be to actually own and do the things shown in ads.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

When I go shopping, I generally like to try on clothes/play with products even if I have no intention of buying them.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

It's fun to think about all the different things my money could potentially buy.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree

When I look at ads that show people who are well-off, I often like to pretend I'm living the lives the people in the ads are living.

O Strongly Disagree
O Disagree
O Neither Agree nor Disagree
O Agree
O Strongly Agree
I often like to look at products online and just imagine owning some of the merchandise.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
O  Neither Agree nor Disagree
O  Agree
O  Strongly Agree

Page 27: General Sense of Desire

I often have vivid thoughts about the things I wish to have or experience.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
O  Neither Agree nor Disagree
O  Agree
O  Strongly Agree

I typically read novels and/or watch movies primarily as an enjoyable means of escape from my daily surroundings.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
O  Neither Agree nor Disagree
O  Agree
O  Strongly Agree

I find that creating an image in my mind of what I would like to experience is enjoyable.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
O  Neither Agree nor Disagree
O  Agree
O  Strongly Agree

I often use my imagination to better understand the things I hope will be possible in the future.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
O  Neither Agree nor Disagree
O  Agree
O  Strongly Agree

I enjoy the feelings I have when I think about things I may possibly own or experience in the future.

O  Strongly Disagree
O  Disagree
I enjoy the feelings I have when I think about things I may possibly own or experience in the future.

- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Page 28: Demographics

For demographic purposes, please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

For demographic purposes, please indicate what year of study you are currently enrolled in.

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Other

Please click through to the next page to record your survey responses.
Appendix E

Study 1: Unattainable Consumption Survey Recruitment Notice

Study Name:
CONSUMPTION POSSIBILITIES

Study Description:
This study examines the thoughts and feelings consumers have towards consumption objects and experiences that you desire. You will be asked to complete a survey comprised of questions about your thoughts and feelings about various consumption situations.

Study Duration:
30 minutes

Note/Requirement:
Laptop computers are required, as this study will be completed through an online study link.
## Appendix F

**Study 1: Unattainable Consumption Survey Item Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unattainability</strong></td>
<td>Despite wanting to purchase a [consumption item] right now, I cannot purchase a [consumption item] today.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5-point scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vividness</strong></td>
<td>When thinking about a [consumption item], how vivid or detailed are the images that come to mind</td>
<td>Not at all vivid – Extremely vivid, 5-point scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Concept</strong></td>
<td>[SELFCON1] If you were able to purchase [your desired consumption item], it would enhance who you are</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5-point scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SELFCON2] If you were able to own [your desired consumption item], it would help you become who you wish to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SELFCON3] If you were able to own [your desired consumption item], it would represent how you wish other people to think of you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[IME1] Imagining what it would be like to have [my desired consumption item] is enjoyable</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5-point scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IME2] Reviewing the mental image I have of [my desired consumption item] in my mind is exciting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IME3] Thinking about [my desired consumption item] reminds me how much I want it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open-ended questions</strong></td>
<td>Even though I desire a [consumption item], I do not have it presently because….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even though you are not yet able to own a [consumption item], is it enjoyable to think about what it would be like to own a [consumption item]? If so, why do you think it is enjoyable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The mental image I have in my mind of owning a [consumption item] includes...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does thinking about the possibilities of owning a [consumption item] make you feel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any downsides to thinking about what owning a [consumption item] might be like prior to actually experiencing it in real life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What types of things could owning a [consumption item] allow you to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Study 2: Critical Incident Technique Interview Protocol

Introduction and Rapport Building:

In this study, we are interested in understanding your thought and feelings relating to consumption objects or desires that you may wish to experience, but due to some reason you have not yet experienced. We aim to better understand what individuals do when they think about the consumption desires they wish to have.

To help us uncover insights relating to consumption desires you wish to have, but have not yet experienced, we are using an interview technique called the critical incident technique. Throughout this interview, I will ask you a series of questions relating to your own consumption desires. You will have the opportunity to choose which consumption desires we talk about, and you will have the opportunity to talk about more than one specific consumption desire. At any point, I may ask clarifying questions based on what you tell me.

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. I will be recording our interview to aide in the analysis phase of our study.

[Have consent form signed]

Themes 1: Unattainable Consumption Desires
There are often many things or experiences individuals wish to experience, but have not been able to yet. What is something that you wish to own or experience, but have not yet had the opportunity to?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Can you describe the item/experience for me?
  - How long have you wanted this item/experience?
  - What got you interested in this item/experience?
  - What prevents you from experiencing this item/experience?

[Note: If multiple desires are brought up immediately, I will ask them to pick one to focus on, and make note of the other suggestions as possible additional incidents for collection once the first desired item/experience is clarified.]

Theme 2: Activities Surrounding Unattainable Consumption Desires
When you think of this item/experience, what images come to mind?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - What types of plans do you have for this item/experience?

Do you ever engage in [pre-consumption activities]? (Note: each activity is to be examined independently, and may include: browsing internet sites, researching the item/experience, creating wish lists, talk to close others)

- What do you do when you engage in these activities?
Do you ever imagine what you would do with this item/experience?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - What do you imagine you do with this item/experience? Can you describe this in more detail?
  - When you imagine your experience with this item/experience, what feelings do you have? What emotions do you have?
  - Do you also daydream or fantasize about what it might be like to have this item/experience?
  - How often do you imagine what you would do with this item/experience? What prompts you to imagine what you would do with this item/experience?

**Theme 3: Experiences of Unattainable Consumption Desires**

When you think about what it might be like to experience this item/experience, do you feel you know what the actual experience may be like?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Do you think your imagined experiences differ from what you might do if you actually experience this time/experience?
  - Do you do anything differently with this item/experience in your imagination than you think you would do in reality?
  - Does imagining what it might be like to experience this item/experience help you in any way?

**Theme 4: Outcomes of Experiencing Unattainable Consumption Desires**

When you think about what it might be like to experience this item/experience, what does this make you feel?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - Do you feel more satisfied that before you thought about this item/experience?
  - Do you feel more interested in this item/experience than before?
  - Do you feel more likely to experience this item/experience in the future?
  - Do you feel more excited about the possibility of experiencing this item/experience in the future?
  - How likely do you think you are to experience your consumption desires in the future?
  - If you never experience your consumption desires in the future, how will you feel?
  - Based on this conversation, how do you feel about your consumption desires?

In thinking about the specific brand of this item/experience, do you think you are more knowledgeable about the brand, based on your interest in this item/experience?

- Clarifying questions may include:
  - What types of feelings do you have for the brand?
  - Have your feelings for the brand changed in any way since becoming interested in this item/experience?
  - Do you feel like this is a brand that represents who you are and who you want to be?
  - How does this brand potentially fit with you and your lifestyle?
Closing Questions:
Thank you for answering all of my questions. At this time, can I ask you about (other consumption desires stated earlier)?

To complete this interview, I have a few more questions aimed at understanding the overall demographics of our interview participants:

- Age?
- Occupation?
- Marital Status?
- Do you have children? If so, how many and what are their ages?
- What is your educational background?
- What is your annual income level?
Appendix H

Study 2: Critical Incident Technique Interviews Recruitment Notice

Direct Connections
(Individuals I have a personal connection to already)

Dear [Name],

As you may know, I am working on completing a doctorate in marketing at the Smith School of Business. As part of my research, I am gathering responses from individuals about their own personal consumption desires that are unattainable at this time. The goal of this research is to understand the experiences that consumers may create through imagining and fantasizing about consumption objects they do not yet own or have experienced.

I am reaching out to you to see if you are willing and able to participate in my research. In order to participate, we would need to arrange an interview time, which can be done either in person (in a setting of your choice) or via Skype. The interview should last no more than 30 minutes and would help improve my understanding of how consumers engage with their consumption desires. If you are interested, please contact me at 3km41@queensu.ca.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks,
Kimberley
Appendix I

Study 3 (A, B, C): Recruitment Notice

Study Name:
CONSUMPTION POSSIBILITIES

Study Description:
This study examines the thoughts and feelings consumers have towards consumption objects and experiences you may desire. You will be asked to read a scenario and complete a questionnaire on the information that is part of the scenario. Questions will ask about your thoughts and feelings regarding the presented information.

Study Duration:
30 minutes

Note/Requirement:
Laptop computers are required, as this study will be completed through an online study link.

Study Name:
CONSUMPTION POSSIBILITIES (Pretesting)

Study Description:
This study involves questions pertaining to various consumption situations. You will be asked to read a few short scenarios and complete a questionnaire on the information that is part of the scenario. Questions will ask about your thoughts and feelings regarding the presented information.

Study Duration:
30 minutes

Note/Requirement:
Laptop computers are required, as this study will be completed through an online study link.
Appendix J

Study 3A: Small versus Large Chances Manipulation Text

Small Chances Condition

We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about various consumption items that are of interest to you and of which you already know a lot about and spend time thinking about what it would be like to have in the future.

We are specifically interested in consumption items that while you would very much like to experience and know a lot about, you also believe it will be extremely unlikely that you will ever experience.

Please take a moment to think about what consumption item you are interested in focusing on today. Again, we ask you to think about things that you think are very appealing to you, but that you also recognize will be extremely unlikely that you will ever experience.

In the space below, please tell us what consumption item you are interested in focusing on today.

The item I believe it will extremely unlikely to ever experience, but I am interested in focusing on in this study is a:

__________________________

Brand (if applicable):

__________________________

When do you expect to buy this item, if ever?

__________________________

What is holding you back from buying this item today?

__________________________

Please confirm that you have chosen to focus on a consumption item that you wish to have, know a lot about and think about a lot, but also believe you will be extremely unlikely to ever experience it.

- Yes, I agree
Large Chances Condition

We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about various consumption items that are of interest to you. We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about various consumption items that are of interest to you and of which you already know a lot about and spend time thinking about what it would be like to have in the future.

We are specifically interested in consumption items that you have not yet experienced but would like to experience, and expect that you will experience at some point in the future.

Please take a moment to think about what consumption item you are interested in focusing on today. Again, we ask you to think about things that you think are very appealing to you, but that you have not yet experienced.

In the space below, please tell us what consumption item you are interested in focusing on today.

The item I expect to experience at some point in the future and I am interested in focusing on in this study is a:

_____________________________________

Brand (if applicable):

_____________________________________

When do you expect to buy this item?

_____________________________________

What is holding you back from buying this item today?

_____________________________________

Please confirm that you have chosen to focus on a consumption item that you wish to have, know a lot about, and think about a lot, that you expect to experience in the future.

• Yes, I agree
### Appendix K

**Study 3A: Item Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Generally speaking, how much do you know about a “item”??</td>
<td>I know a little – I know a lot, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance Of Consuming In The Future</strong></td>
<td>Thinking about your desire for a “item,” how important is it for you to eventually attain a “item”?</td>
<td>Extremely unimportant – Extremely important, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood /Chances Of Consuming In The Future</strong></td>
<td>What are the chances that you will be able to attain a “item” in your lifetime?</td>
<td>Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective Prior Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>[SPK1] In general, I know a lot about a “item”.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPK2] I feel very knowledgeable about a “item”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPK4] Compared to most other people, I know a lot about owning a “item”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective Prior Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</strong></td>
<td>[SPIME3] I often revisit my thoughts about having a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPIME4] I frequently spend time thinking about having a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</strong></td>
<td>[IMEENG1] Imagining what it would be like to have a “item” is enjoyable.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMENEG2] Reviewing the mental images I have of a &quot;item&quot; in my mind is exciting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMENEG7] It is fun to imagine what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME2] When thinking about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;, how concrete or specific are the images that come to mind?</td>
<td>Not at all concrete – Extremely concrete, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME3] When thinking about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;, how easy is it to picture what you would want to experience?</td>
<td>Not easy to picture – Extremely easy to picture, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immersive</strong></td>
<td>How immersive do you find thinking about what it would be like to have an “item”?</td>
<td>Not at all immersive – Extremely immersive, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desire</strong></td>
<td>[DESIRE1] Thinking about what it would be like to have a “item” increases my desire for a “item”</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[DESIRE2] Thinking about what it would be like to have a “item” motivates me to obtain a “item” in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[DESIRE5] My desire for a “Item” is stronger now than it was previously.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Imaginative Mental Experiences</td>
<td>[IMESAT1] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, do you now know more about what you’d like to experience in the future?</td>
<td>I do not know anything more about what I’d like to experience in the future - I know a lot more about what I’d like to experience in the future, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMESAT2] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, does imagining what you’d like to experience in the future satisfy your curiosity about what it might be like?</td>
<td>Does not satisfy my curiosity - Does satisfy my curiosity, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMESAT3] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, does imagining what you’d like to experience in the future allow you to better understand the potential outcomes you’d gain in real life?</td>
<td>Does not allow me to better understand potential outcomes - Does allow me to better understand potential outcomes, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>When reflecting on what you imagined about your desired consumption experience with a “item”, do you feel…</td>
<td>Not at all - Very much so, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO4] Joyful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO5] Happy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO6] Delighted?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO12] Thrilled?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>When reflecting on what you imagined about your desired consumption experience with a “item”, do you feel…</td>
<td>Not at all - Very much so, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO3] Stressed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO8] Scared?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO10] Burdened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Enhancement</td>
<td>[SELFCON1] If you were able to own a “item”, it would help you become who you wish to be.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SELFCON2] If you were able to own a “item”, it would represent how you wish other people to think of you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>[LIFESAT1] In most ways my life is close to my ideal.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT2] The conditions of my life are excellent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT3] I am satisfied with my life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT4] So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT5] If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation Check</td>
<td>Thinking back to the item you chose to focus on in this study, a “item”, what are the chances that you will ever experience this item in your life?</td>
<td>Extremely unlikely - Extremely likely, 1-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L

Study 3B: Self-Expressive versus Non-Self-Expressive Manipulation Text

Self-Expressive Condition

We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about various consumption items that are of interest to you. We are specifically interested in consumption items that you have not yet purchased, but find desirable to potentially acquire at some point in the future. In this study, we’d like you to take a moment to think about a consumption item that is something you desire and are interested in potentially acquiring it in the future. In the space below, please tell us what consumption item you are interested in focusing on in this study.

The item I have not yet purchased but I am interested in focusing on in this study is a:

_____________________________________

Brand (if applicable):

_____________________________________

When do you expect to buy this item?

_____________________________________

What is holding you back from buying this item today?

_____________________________________

Please confirm that you have chosen to focus on a consumption item that you are interested in having, but that you have not yet been able to purchase.

• Yes, I agree

Non-Self-Expressive Condition

In this study, we’d like you to focus on a specific consumption item that you find desirable, and tell us your thoughts and feelings about that item.

Various consumption items are listed below. Of the consumption items listed below, please select the one you find the most desirable, are most interested in focusing on for the remainder of this study.

The consumption item I would like to focus on for the remainder of this study is:

• A television (1)
• A toaster oven (2)
• A stand mixer (3)
Television: Selected:
Thank you for selecting a Television as your focal item for this study.

In this study, we'd like to you think about the possibility of purchasing a new television - one that has up-to-date features and that would allow you to watch what you want, when you want.

Although televisions are a generic item that you may or may not own presently, we'd like you to think about the possibility of owning a new television of your choice in the future.

Do you expect to buy a Television in the future? If so, when?
_____________________________________

What, if anything, is holding you back from buying a Television today?
_____________________________________

Please confirm that you will keep this item in mind for the remainder of the study.
  • Yes, I agree
Toaster Oven: Selected
Thank you for selecting a Toaster Oven as your focal item for this study.

In this study, we'd like to you think about the possibility of purchasing a new toaster oven - one that has up-to-date features and that would allow you to cook and re-heat food at your own convenience.

Although toaster ovens are a generic item that you may or may not own presently, we'd like you to think about the possibility of owning a new toaster oven of your choice in the future.

Do you expect to buy a Toaster Oven in the future? If so, when?

_____________________________________

What, if anything, is holding you back from buying a Toaster Oven today?

_____________________________________

Please confirm that you will keep this item in mind for the remainder of the study.

- Yes, I agree
Thank you for selecting a Stand Mixer as your focal item for this study.

In this study, we'd like to you think about the possibility of purchasing a new Stand Mixer - one that would allow you to do a variety of kitchen tasks.

Although Stand Mixers are a generic item that you may or may not own presently, we'd like you to think about the possibility of owning a new Stand Mixer of your choice in the future.

Do you expect to buy a Stand Mixer in the future? If so, when?

_____________________________________

What, if anything, is holding you back from buying a Stand Mixer today?

_____________________________________

Please confirm that you will keep this item in mind for the remainder of the study.

• Yes, I agree
Appendix M

Study 3B: Item Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge</td>
<td>Generally speaking, how much do you know about a “item”?</td>
<td>I know a little – I know a lot, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance Of Consuming In The Future</td>
<td>Thinking about your desire for a “item,” how important is it for you to eventually attain a “item”?</td>
<td>Extremely unimportant – Extremely important, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood /Chances Of Consuming In The Future</td>
<td>How likely are you to attain a “item” in your lifetime?</td>
<td>Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>[SPK1] In general, I know a lot about a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPK2] I feel very knowledgeable about a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPK3] Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the &quot;experts&quot; on owning a &quot;item&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPK4] Compared to most other people, I know a lot about owning a &quot;item&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Prior Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>[SPIME1] Previous to today, I have thought a lot about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPIME3] I often revisit my thoughts about having a &quot;item&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPIME4] I frequently spend time thinking about having a &quot;item&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</td>
<td>[IMEENG1] Imagining what it would be like to have a “item” is enjoyable</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG2] Reviewing the mental images I have of a “item” in my mind is exciting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG3] Reviewing the mental images I have of a “item” in my mind is rewarding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG4] Thinking about a “item” reminds me how much I want it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG5] I find imagining what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot; entertaining.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG6] I find imagining what it would be like to have a “item” pleasant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG7] It is fun to imagine what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME1] When thinking about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;, how vivid or detailed are the images that come to mind?</td>
<td>Not at all vivid – Vivid – Extremely vivid, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME2] When thinking about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;, how concrete or specific are the images that come to mind?</td>
<td>Not at all concrete – concrete – Extremely concrete, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME3] When thinking about what it would be like to have a &quot;item&quot;, how easy is it to picture what you would want to experience?</td>
<td>Not easy to picture – Extremely easy to picture, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immersive</strong></td>
<td>How immersive do you find thinking about what it would be like to have an “item”?</td>
<td>Not at all immersive – Extremely immersive, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heightened Experience of Desire</strong></td>
<td>[DESIRE1] Thinking about what it would be like to have a “item” increases my desire for a “item”</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[DESIRE2] Thinking about what it would be like to have a “item” motivates me to obtain a “item” in the future.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>[DESIRE5] My desire for a “Item” is stronger now than it was previously.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[IMESAT1] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, do you now know more about what you’d like to experience in the future?</td>
<td>I do not know anything more about what I’d like to experience in the future - I know a lot more about what I’d like to experience in the future, 1-7 Does not satisfy my curiosity - Does satisfy my curiosity, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[IMESAT2] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, does imagining what you’d like to experience in the future satisfy your curiosity about what it might be like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Emotions</strong></td>
<td>When reflecting on what you imagined about your desired consumption experience with a “item”, do you feel...</td>
<td>Not at all - Very much so, 1-7</td>
</tr>
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<td>[EMO1] Excited?</td>
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<td>[EMO6] Delighted?</td>
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<td><strong>Life Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>[LIFESAT1] In most was my life is close to my ideal.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT2] The conditions of my life are excellent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT3] I am satisfied with my life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT4] So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Emotions</strong></td>
<td>When reflecting on what you imagined about your desired consumption experience with a “item”, do you feel…</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO2] A sense of dread?</td>
<td>Not at all - Very much so, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO3] Stressed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[EMO8] Scared?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>[EMO10] Burdened?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Concept Enhancement</strong></td>
<td>[SELFCON1] If you were able to purchase a “item”, it would enhance who you are.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SELFCON2] If you were able to own a “item”, it would help you become who you wish to be.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SELFCON3] If you were able to own a “item”, it would represent how you wish other people to think of you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Effort</strong></td>
<td>Thinking about your experience during this study, how much mental effort did you require in order to complete this study?</td>
<td>Very, very low mental effort - Very, very high mental effort, 1-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N

Study 3C: Inaccurate versus Accurate Presumptions Manipulation Text

Overview of Condition (All Participants)

On the previous page, we asked you to imagine the experience of having a “item”. Reflecting on what you imagined, there are likely things you presume might occur if you were to actually experience a “item”.

For example, if you desired a vacation to Cuba, you might have imagined how sunny and warm it will be on the beach when you are in Cuba. Thus, you presume that the weather in Cuba will be sunny and warm.

At this time, we’d like you to reflect on what you wrote on the previous page, regarding what you imagine having a “item” to be like.

Accurate Presumptions Condition

In the spaces below, we’d like you to list up to three different presumptions that you specifically feel accurately reflect what you believe the experience of a “item” will be like:

I presume that... (1) ________________________________________________

I presume that... (2) ________________________________________________

I presume that... (3) ________________________________________________

At this time, are there any other thoughts that come to mind regarding your presumptions of what it might be like to experience a “item”?

_________________________________________________________________{

_________________________________________________________________{

_________________________________________________________________{

_________________________________________________________________{

_________________________________________________________________{
Inaccurate Presumptions Condition

In the spaces below, we’d like you to list *up to three* different presumptions that you specifically feel *may not accurately* reflect what you believe the experience of a “item” will be like:

I presume that... (1) ________________________________________________
I presume that... (2) ________________________________________________
I presume that... (3) ________________________________________________

At this time, are there any other thoughts that come to mind regarding your presumptions of what it might be like to experience a “item”?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________
## Appendix O

### Study 3C: Item Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Generally speaking, how much do you know about a “item”?</td>
<td>I know a little – I know a lot, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance of Consuming In The Future</strong></td>
<td>Thinking about your desire for a “item,” how important is it for you to eventually attain a “item”?</td>
<td>Extremely unimportant – Extremely important, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likelihood /Chances of Consuming In The Future</strong></td>
<td>What are the chances that you will be able to attain a “item” in your lifetime?</td>
<td>Extremely unlikely – Extremely likely, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective Prior Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>[SPK1] In general, I know a lot about a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>[SPK2] I feel very knowledgeable about a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[SPK6] If I were able to purchase a “item” today, I would need to gather very little information in order to make a wise decision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective Prior Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</strong></td>
<td>[SPIME1] Previous to today, I have thought a lot about what it would be like to have a “item”.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SPIME2] Over time, I have developed a very clear image of what I think experiencing a “item” would be like.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>[SPIME3] I often revisit my thoughts about having a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[SPIME4] I frequently spend time thinking about having a &quot;item&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presumption Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>[PREBELIEF1] When I presume that “item” I find it to be...</td>
<td>Extremely believable (5) - Extremely unbelievable (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREBELIEF2] When I presume that “item” I think it is...</td>
<td>Extremely accurate reflection of what may actually happen (5) - Not accurate at all of what may actually happen (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREBELIEF3] When I presume that “item” I think it is...</td>
<td>Extremely reasonable to expect (5) - Extremely unreasonable to expect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREBELIEF4] When I presume that “item” I think it...</td>
<td>Definitely will occur as I imagine (5) - Definitely will not occur as I imagine (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presumption Feelings</strong></td>
<td>[PREFEEL1] When I presume that “item” I find it to be</td>
<td>Extremely positive thought (5) – Extremely negative thought (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREFEEL2] When I presume that “item” I find it to be</td>
<td>Extremely close to the ideal experience I imagine (5) – Not close to the ideal experience I imagine (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREFEEL3] When I presume that “item” it makes me feel</td>
<td>Extremely satisfied (5) – Extremely dissatisfied (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREFEEL4] When I presume that “item” it makes me feel</td>
<td>Extremely good (5) – Extremely bad (1)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>[PREFEEL5] When I presume that “item” it makes me feel</td>
<td>Delightful (5) – Terrible (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PREFEEL6] When I presume that “item” it makes me feel</td>
<td>Extremely happy (5) - Extremely unhappy (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imaginative Mental Experience Engagement</strong></td>
<td>[IMEENG1] Imagining what it would be like to have a “item” is enjoyable.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>[IMEENG2] Reviewing the mental images I have of a “item” in my mind is exciting.</td>
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<td>[IMEENG5] I find imagining what it would be like to have a “item” entertaining.</td>
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<td>[IMEENG7] It is fun to imagine what it would be like to have a “item”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vividness of Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME1] When thinking about what it would be like to have a “item”, how vivid or detailed are the images that come to mind?</td>
<td>Not at all vivid – Vivid – Extremely vivid, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME2] When thinking about what it would be like to have a “item”, how concrete or specific are the images that come to mind?</td>
<td>Not at all concrete – concrete – Extremely concrete, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[VIVIDIME3] When thinking about what it would be like to have a “item”, how easy is it to picture what you would want to experience?</td>
<td>Not easy to picture – Extremely easy to picture, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immersive</strong></td>
<td>How immersive do you find thinking about what it would be like to have an “item”?</td>
<td>Not at all immersive – Extremely immersive, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heightened Experience of Desire</strong></td>
<td>[DESIRE3] If I actually had a “item,” I would be able to achieve positive outcomes in my life.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[DESIRE4] Thinking about having a “item” helps me to focus on my goals for the future.</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfaction With Imaginative Mental Experiences</strong></td>
<td>[IMESAT1] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, do you now know more about what you’d like to experience in the future?</td>
<td><em>I do not know anything more about what I’d like to experience in the future – I know a lot more about what I’d like to experience in the future, 1-7</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>[IMESAT2] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, does imagining what you’d like to experience in the future satisfy your curiosity about what it might be like?</td>
<td><em>Does not satisfy my curiosity – Does satisfy my curiosity, 1-7</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>[IMESAT3] Reflecting on the process of imagining what it would be like to have a “item”, does imagining what you’d like to experience in the future allow you to better understand the potential outcomes you’d gain in real life?</td>
<td><em>Does not allow me to better understand potential outcomes – Does allow me to better understand potential outcomes, 1-7</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Emotions</strong></td>
<td>When reflecting on what you imagined about your desired consumption experience with a “item”, do you feel…</td>
<td><em>Not at all – Very much so, 1-7</em></td>
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<td>[EMO2] Thrilled?</td>
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<td><strong>Negative Emotions</strong></td>
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<td>[EMO11] Sad?</td>
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<td>[SELFCON1] If you were able to purchase a “item”, it would enhance who you are.</td>
<td><em>Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 1-7</em></td>
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<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>[LIFESAT1] In most was my life is close to my ideal.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree –</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>[LIFESAT2] The conditions of my life are excellent.</td>
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<td>[LIFESAT4] So far, I have gotten the important things I want</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[LIFESAT5] If I could live my life over, I would change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>almost nothing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manipulation Check</td>
<td>Thinking back to the item you chose to focus on in this study,</td>
<td>Extremely unlikely -</td>
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<td>a “item”, what are the chances that you will ever experience</td>
<td>Extremely likely, 1-7</td>
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<td>this item in your life?</td>
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